EZRA POUND

Canto 85

LING[2]

Our dynasty came in because of a great sensibility.

All there by the time of Y Yin

All roots by the time of Y Yin.

Galileo index'd 1616,

Wellington's peace after Vaterloo

chih[3]

a gnomon,
Our science is from the watching of shadows;
That Queen Bess translated Ovid,
Cleopatra wrote of the currency,
Versus who scatter old records
ignoring the hsien form

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and jump to the winning side
(turbae)

II. 9. have scopes and beginnings tchōung

仁 智 chèu

jen[2] chih[4] i-li

are called chung[1-4]

衷

(1508, Mathews)

仁 好

甲

no mere epitome without organization.
The sun under it all:
Justice, d'urbanité, de prudence

wei heou, Σοφία

the sheltered grass hopes, chueh, cohere.
(No, that is *not* philological)
Not led of lusting, not of contriving
but is as the grass and tree
eccellenza
not led of lusting,
not of the worm, contriving

THE FOUR TUAN[1]

端

or foundations.

Hulled rice and silk at easter
(with the *bachi* held under their aprons
From T'ang's time until now)
That you lean 'gainst the tree of heaven,
and know Ygdrasail

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poi

時 shih²

忱 ch'ên²

忞

"Birds and terrapin lived under Hia,
beast and fish held their order,
Neither flood nor flame falling in excess"

i
moaŏ
pŏu
gnîng

Perspicax qui excolit se ipsum,
Their writings wither because they have no curiosity,
This "leader", gouged pumpkin
that they hoist on a pole,
But if you will follow this process

德

not a lot of signs, but the one sign
etcetera
plus always Τέχνη
and from Τέχνη back to σεαυτόν
Neither by chinks, nor by sophists,
nor by hindoo immaturities;
Dante, out of St Victor (Ricardus),
Erigena with greek tags in his verses.
Y Yin sent the young king into seclusion
by T'ang Tomb to think things over,
that they make total war on CONTEMPLATIO.
Not to pamper this squirrel-headedness
"in T'oung loco palatiam"

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and not to bitch this whole generation in fish-traps
k'ŏ
tchōung
ìun
tĕ
put some elbow-grease into it
the third séu

祀 szŭ⁴ Mat. 5592

Nor by vain disputations
nor sitting down on a job that is done
ĭ jênn iuên

以

whereby, in the long run,

貞 chên

reddidit gubernium imperatori

陳 ch'ên

戒 chiai

As the pivot perceived by Y Yin
quam simplex animus Imperatoris
that the different clans say: Bigob! He *said* it.
III. 6. xi, Right here is the Bill of Rights

獲
自
盡

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匹
夫匹
婦

Three hundred years until P'an

盤
P'an Keng

各
長
于
厥
居

Baros metetz en gatge!
Alexander paid the debts of his troops.
Not serendipity
but to spread

德

tê thru the people.

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The pusillanimous
wanting all men cut down to worm-size.
Mr. Roosevelt chose Dexter White.
As against culture as quick-sand
after " '48" (1848)
philology subdivided,
Nap III had the composition divided,
to each compositor in the print shop
a very few lines,
none seeing the whole Proclamation.
Keep 'em off the market four years
and leave 'em without understanding,
No classics,
no American history,
no centre, no general root,
No *prezzo giusto* as core.
UBI JUS VAGUM.
Alexander paid the debts of his soldiery.
Wishing to bring back T'ang's state of awareness

高 *KAO*

宗 *TSOUNG* 1324
1265 a.c.

59

Whetstone whirling to grind, jòu
tsŏ
lí
cymba et remis
Trees prop up clouds,
Praecognita bonum ut te moveas
and then consider the time

liú 慮

cheu 時

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"Fatigare in sacris
dicitur non revereri"
Fou iue

III. viii, 11. tchoung

in rites not flame-headed.
"Up to then, I just hadn't caught on.
chung
wang
hsien " said KAO TSOUNG

Imperator. Sicut vinum ac mustum
brew up this directio, tchéu,
fermentum et germina,
study with the mind of a grandson
and watch the time like a hawk
taó tsĭ
½ research and ½ Τέχνη
½ observation, ½ Τέχνη
½ training, ½ Τέχνη
Tch'eng T'ang for guide.

You will go a long way without slipping,
without slopping over.
Nisi cum sapientibus non regit,
nor sage feed from poisoned trough.
200 years after:
"Best you retire.
but as for me, nunquam ego
wang
pou.

Not after this dynasty."

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Ki went into Corea,
"abire decere", lest the line be no more.

IV.

And in spring time
assembled at Meng-ford
tá houéi Meng tsīn,
that had from Heōu Tsi under Shun
by the three streams, the three rivers,
Ping, Foung were their cities,
and North-East to Mount Ki.
Tàn Fóu, to King Wan.
"Our dynasty came in because of a great sensibility."
Les moeurs furent réformées, 靈
la vertu fleurit
Ad Meng vadum, 1122
south bank of the Yellow River,
Huang Ho.
Heaven and Earth begat the perceiver,
"cui ditta è dentro"
& Cheóu demittit aerumnas.
Ling[2]
靈
was basis of rule.

Ts'oung 聰 tsŏ
tàn 睿 iuên
ming 明 heôu

Cheóu demittit aerumnas:
"Gentlemen from the West,
Heaven's process is quite coherent
and its main points perfectly clear."

顯 hsien.

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Wu 武 leant on the yellow halbard
in his right, the white signal tail:
" e canta la gallina,
" he is ganged up with racketeers
" 6 steps or 7, reform.
" 4, 5, 7 strokes, reassemble

止 chèu
齊 t'sì

nài tcheù t'sì
and do not chase fugitives."

Cheóu's host was like a forest in Mu plain,

林 quasi silvam convenit
jo lin.

"Liking some, disliking others, doing injustice to no man."

極
血
偏

The 4th part: marginalia.

Liu dogs, serendipity? No.

恫 t'ōung
瘝 kouān 9.6

T'ōung kouān nài chēnn

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乃
身
not water, ôu iū chouèi
辰 mîn
監 kién 10.12

There be thy mirrour in men.

土
中
旦 Tán
曰 iuĕ
配 p'ei
皇 houâng

XIII, 9 k'i p'eng 其
朋

火 Odysseus "to no man"

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tchŏ

and you can know the sincere
That Tch'eng T'ang

overthrew Hia
Praestantissimos regere

tien[4]

from Tch'eng T'ang to Ti I
nullus non splendidas fecit,
nullus non se sociavit (t'ien[4])
k'i tche, ut benefaceret.
Tcheou neither watching his
own insides, nor respecting the workings.
Our Dynasty came in because of great Ling[2]

sensibility

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丕 p'ei

The arrow has not two points

貳 pŏu éul chĕu
pu erh[4]

"O nombreux officiers"

Imperator ait.

邑

Iterum dico

太 T'AI MEOU 1637
戊, 1562

武 OU' TING, 1324
丁 1265

cognovit aerumnas

T'SOU KIA reigned 33 years

惟 wei

正 tcheng

之 tcheū

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XV:11 供 kōung

naught above just contribution

invicem docentes 胥 siu M.2835

kiaó. chiao,[1-4]

hsü, in the first tone

that is Sagetrieb 教

時 chêu

我 ngò

We flop if we cannot maintain the awareness XVI.4
Diuturna cogites 10
respect the awareness and

train the fit men.

明 mîng ngò tsíun 俊 XVI.20
chün[4] 1727. Mat.

Cdn't see it (ming) could

命 extend to the people's subsidia,

that it was in some fine way tied up with the people
"And don't pester your officers" XIX, 18
"Don't get into small dog-fights"
Hiŏ kòu jōu kouàn XX.16
"Get the mot juste before action."

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斷 touán cf. The Ta Seu

Awareness restful & fake is fatiguing. 18
XXI. 7. nor laws as a means of oppression.
Not all things from one man

備 (pei⁴)

容 yung²

That is, in some cases, charity
iou ioung te nai ta
awareness extended

生 chēng XXI, 14

厚 heóu

The 5 laws have root in an awareness
che funge.

"One of those days", said Brancusi,
"when I would not have given
"15 minutes of my time
for anything under heaven."

Dead in the Piazza Loreto,
In Halloran's case, murder protected.
Jury trial was in Athens.
Tyrants resisted
οὐ ταῦτα . . . . κακοῖσι δειλίαν
King Owen had men about him:
Prince of Kouo,
Houng Ieo, San I Cheng

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Sagetrieb

as the hand grips the wheat,

Risked the smoke to go forward

aperiens tibi animum:

NOTE.—Kung said he had added nothing. Canto 85 is a somewhat detailed confirmation of Kung's view that the basic principles of government are found in the Shu, the History Classic. The numerical references are to Couvreur's Chou King. Meaning of the ideograms is usually given in the English text; transliterations as in Couvreur and Mathews.

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WYNDHAM LEWIS

Monstre Gai

In an earlier book (The Childermass) *crowds of dead men were gathered upon a plain outside the gigantic walls of what they naturally supposed was Heaven. An open air court was held, presided over by a functionary known as the "Bailiff", assisted by a large staff of attendants. This magistrate was ferried across the river which surrounded the City, daily. Those who wished to do so might appeal for a sort of right to enter, and get themselves passed in as sufficiently unique.*

Two of these appellants had decided to effect an entrance to the celestial city in a less orthodox way. So it is that Pullman and Satters are discovered, as night falls, upon the white marble steps of the Magnetic City.

For the rest, everything will be revealed to the reader as it was to Pullman and Satters.

—W. L.

THE WATERMAN WAS NOW ONLY a shadow. At last he had gone behind the moonlight. He had passed through a veil of transparent steel. Out of the smokey gray of the waters he rose lying outlined through the shining wall of the moon. This deaf one-dimensional nonentity it would not be possible to recall.

They were lonely specks, the blank-gated prodigious city was isolated by its riverine moat, and they had cast themselves away, and were committed to effect an entrance or to die. It was darkening rapidly. This was welcomed by Pullman: let the night come quickly and swallow them up and blot them out. These stairs, which must be twenty feet wide, were of the whitest marble; there was not enough shadow for a mouse to take cover upon this starlit expanse where he and Satters stuck up like a couple of misplaced scarecrows upon a field of virgin corn.

From the camp this had not looked so starkly exposed a place as it was. The fag-master, the master-spirit, had not foreseen that they would be two unhideable figures: it was difficult to discern

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any details from the other side of the water, but his plan was that they should wait, in such concealing shadows as could be found, the arrival of the Bailiff and his cortege, slipping in at the end of the procession. But the Bailiff was behind time.

The coming of night would do very little good, it became obvious, because of the light of the stars. As night fell they became conscious of the dark pit of the light-years exposed in front of them. They were awed and frightened as they shivered upon the giant stairs, rising to the Gates of the Magnetic City. The stars were larger and colder than on earth, the sky was a chillier and emptier depth. Pullman was terrified by these enormous glaring worlds and constellations, three times the size they were in the earthly night. In another respect they differed markedly. Instead of an attractive glitter, or, if they were small, a pretty twinkle, here they had this deadly glare. It was bluish, lending to Satters a corpselike pallor. Pullman thought of his own less robust complexion with consternation. It must look frightful. It could even have a demoralising effect upon his squire, who might interpret it as the pallor of fear.

There was something even more disturbing than their conspicuousness, and the inhospitable grandeur of the heavens; something which progressively claimed more and more their exclusive attention. The walls, it seemed, emitted a magnetic influence of some sort, which Pullman found it difficult to define, and which, it slowly dawned on them, held possibilities of a superlatively unpleasant kind.

The colossal mushroom-coloured walls, rising out of the water to almost a thousand feet, contained some repulsive agent. It was not heat, indeed there was no heat at all in the slight vibration that was communicated. It was like a new impalpable film, or new atmosphere, into which they had unwittingly penetrated. It held them as it repelled them, like an existential element, neither cold nor warm, but subtly terrifying. The appalling attraction of the black chasm of the sky and this new insidious element, belonging to the gigantic walls, competed for a while for the mastery of their shrinking spines: but the nearest of these two influences in the end alone remained. Everything else faded out in the foreground.

Satters pressed himself up against Pullman, the large moist hand

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of the overgrown fag clutching piteously the arm of the elder, the arm of authority. "Pulley," he exploded in a ghastly purr, "I shall die, Pulley, if I have to stand here much longer. I'm through, I really am. What is the matter with this place! It's not cold is it, really? It's something worse than cold. It's horrible. I wish we had never left the camp. I'd give anything to be over there instead of here, the other side of the beastly water, with all the other chaps, in that awful foxhole of ours. Don't you wish you were, Pulley? Pulley! I feel I am a thousand miles away, it *is* a thousand miles away I believe." He pressed closer, panicking. "I feel just as if I *were* dead this time. I never felt like this before. Oh I do not wish to go through that gate, Pulley! D' you hear? I say, did you hear what I said?" He began to whimper like a frightened dog. He pressed nearer to Pullman. "I would throw myself into that water, if it were not . . . if it were not for . . . if it were not for . . ."

"Exactly," Pullman said, whose feelings were nearer to Satters' than he would have liked to confess. But what was expected of the prefect successfully banished the sensations unbecoming in a senior. He glanced contemptuously at his quailing companion. "We are probably somewhere between the Pole Star and the Sun," he observed with detachment, not too easily achieved. "My spine feels as though it were going to melt. But I don't expect that it will."

The thought of Pullman melting like a man of wax, and of finding himself thenceforth alone, had so disintegrating an effect upon Satters that he clung desperately to the masterful being at his side. "I don't know what I shall do if your sp . . . sper . . . sper . . . spine . . ."

Pullman shook him off irritably. "Put your mind at rest. You will dissolve before I shall."

Satters' trembling limbs grew steadier, his thoughts began to run in less desperate channels. The sense of indestructibility which Pullman had managed to communicate, had the desired effect.

Pullman braced himself and did his best to remain erect, a model to the wilting Satters. He set his teeth, he clenched his hands. But the atmospheric strangeness, which was undermining him, rapidly made it impossible for him to keep up appearances.

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It was not long before he lowered himself into a sitting position. Satters, he found, had already succumbed: he lay at full length upon one of the huge stairs.

"This is awful," Satters greeted Pullman, dully. "I feel like nothing on earth. Do you? I say, where have we got to?"

Pullman said nothing. He sat beside his fag gazing ahead, his forearms clasped around his knees, his stick at his side. He did not sit for long like this. He, too, lay down below Satters, feeling colder and colder every minute, but quite unable to get to his feet and stamp about to improve his circulation.

Pullman did not realise he had fallen asleep. His eyes opened, he looked up. To his horrified amazement he found that the Bailiff was gazing down into his face with great geniality.

"Are you able to rise?" the magistrate asked.

It was an immense effort to lift himself up to his feet.

"What is your name?" enquired the Bailiff gently, holding out a hand to steady him.

"Pullman," said he, passing his hand over his face.

"It's very disagreeable out here. You will find it warmer inside," the Bailiff smiled. "I don't know for whose benefit they magnetise these walls I'm sure. Perhaps they have me in mind—I often wonder! However, fall in behind my men, Pullman. See if you can persuade that friend of yours to get to his feet. If he is too weak, I will get somebody to carry him in. You will feel much better, Pullman, as soon as you are inside the Gates." The Bailiff nodded and smiled as he returned to his litter.

Pullman succeeded in getting Satters into a standing position, and like two drunken men they staggered through the Gates. The Gates met again behind them with an impressive noiselessness. —They entered a sort of tunnel, extending for a distance of fifty yards. As they were so unsteady in the darkness they were apt to hurtle against those ahead of them, who retaliated with savage blows. The structure beneath which they were passing shook with heavy vibrations of the massive elevator being operated overhead.

At last they stepped out into the Magnetic City, or it would be more true to say, rocked and staggered out. Pullman's first reactions were simultaneously physiological and psychical. There was the rushing of blood down his arteries, and a tremendously violent romantic disillusion. The splendours of the imagination

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crashed! Where was the unearthly spectacle he had expected to see? They found themselves in no fairy scene, such as rises in the 'afterworld' section of the cloudy crypts of the imagination. They did not find themselves among the radiant structures of solid gold or beneath the ambrosial foliage of glittering trees of the pipe-dream-world paradise. It was not at all like that. It was indeed the reverse; and as though in additional mockery their bodies jumped and exploded as if a jinn had got into them. Underfoot was the slovenly dust of a natural city. Behind them, and above them, the cyclopean battlements rose into the sky. The dimensions of what enclosed this place at least were unreal, and enormous. But that was the extent of the departure from the norm. Crawling up those dizzily-mounting walls were iron ladders of the kind used in compliance with the safety requirements, for escape in case of fire. Where they stood, on issuing from the tunnel, was a herbless, level earth, of parade-ground type (groups of uniformed men stood near the structure which was built over the tunnel, ascending in steeply diminishing perspective, to the summit of the battlements). There were other signs of the presence of the military: a military flatness and emptiness. A hundred yards away were the bare sides of modern city blocks, up which zigzagged iron ladders resembling those affixed to the battlements.

Now there was an interval, while the Bailiff's patchwork militia was paraded for the march through the city. The companies were sorting themselves out; ten trumpets and ten drums took up their position at the head of the column. Next to them came the negro band, and after that the hundred and fifty strong company of so-called gladiators. In the wake of this massive body of men came the Bailiff in his litter, and, after him, about one hundred and fifty haiduks and nubians, as also the executioner and his assistants. These were followed by a miscellaneous body of various composition. Finally, a carefully picked nilotic troop, daintily garmented and heavily armed. As a most inelegant bedraggled appendage came Pullman and Satters.

The military master-at-arms, who was a glorified sergeant-major, moved, fiery-eyed, from section to section of his armament. Reaching the negro band he searched for a blemish in the gleaming instruments, next checked the sparkling silver buttons: he

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examined the finger nails on the track of dirt, and saw to it that the whiteness of the teeth took full advantage of the blackness of the face. He treated the fierce gladiators as though they had been cut-purses, concealing something in their massive cuffs or hiding spoils in their holsters. Shouting at them continually, he flung them about, and screamed at any spot he discovered on their tunics, or on the webbing employed for small-arms. As to the haiduks, no Turk who had caught one could have kid-gloved him less.

The uses of the various classes of warriors would be plain to anyone who had seen him at work. The Gladiators were the personal bodyguard, never used for policing the appellants nor in executions. The Bailiff's savagery was less apparent when entrusted to savages.

These four or five hundred armed men were exquisitely drilled, and, for the rest, spotless. The parade preened itself in outdated military splendour. Each group had a pennon or standard. The Bailiff's personal standard was the most spectacular.

It was borne before his litter, now held in readiness by two leather-aproned bearers. Practically flat, displayed like a tapestry, it was brilliantly coloured, in pale green and dark cinnamon. There were two main features in the design; on the right was the Mundane Egg—this in dazzling white; a serpent's head, the neck inflated and shaped like a hood, stood darkly beside it upon the green background; all the design, except for the egg and figures, were in dark cinnamon. Then the body of the serpent was rigid, steeply diagonal, and it carried on its back a diminutive E (EL, one of the ten names of God). In almost imperceptible tracery, upon the silver-white of the Mundane Egg appeared an orphic inscription. On the opposite side were the letters

Ἰχθύς

meaning fish; "The Great Fish" was a manner of referring to Jesus Christ. And these letters were enclosed in an oval, pointed at one end, representing a fish, a small circle for the eye standing not far from the pointed extremity. This symbolic consociation duplicated the forms of the ovoid fish and the cosmogonic Egg. Lastly, the number 666 was found near the summit of the banner, between the two groups of symbols.

Strolling forward, mainly to stretch his legs, Pullman's atten-

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tion was attracted by the banner. The serpent's head in conjunction with the Egg presented no difficulty, but the significance of 666, though it had a familiar sound, baffled him. He paused a moment, his eyes fixed upon the mysterious number, when he became conscious of someone behind the curtains of the litter. Not without some slight misgiving he realised that the Bailiff was within, the curtains drawn. The magistrate exposed his square-nosed smile, as he thrust a hooked finger of informal summons through the opening of the curtains. Pullman approached, his face unmoved. He said, "I did not see you, sir!"

"Do you like my pretty banner?" The Bailiff's voice was insinuatingly dulcet.

"Very much, sir. It is a beautiful banner. Could you tell me the significance of the number 666? Or is that impertinently inquisitive?"

"Noo . . . o . . . oh!" sang the magistrate archly. "I have a note of that somewhere. Come and see me at my residence. Let me write down your name—how could I have forgotten it!"

"James Pullman." Pullman's name was written down, and just then an imperious blast was sounded. Pullman bowed and went back to the position allotted him.

"You left me here!" Satters grumbled, with the face of someone with a toothache, which stopped him from feeling anything else as much as otherwise he would.

An even louder blast of the trumpet sounded. The parade already faced at right angles, pointed in the direction of its march: so there were no words of command, except what the master-at-arms now bellowed. "Parade—Parade! 'Shun. Quick . . . March!" Stamping like the Foot-Guards do, the parade got in motion.

Trumpets and drums furiously blown and beaten, the Bailiff aloft in his litter, the negro bandsmen poising the mouths of enormous silver instruments above their heads, and behind these tall-boys a succession of tubes of blazing silver, each watched over by a shining ebony face—all the barbaric bombast of the Bailiff's parade, headed up a cheerless twentieth century side-street, stupefied by the customary torpor of that hour of the day.

The Bailiff with his square nose and his apple for a chin, the trumpeters, all the strutters and swaggerers, passed the carpet-slippers of a seated man, exposed to the evening street, relaxed

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within a doorway, the white smoke of his pipe curling around the bold white cliffs of his hair; passed a black cat seated upon a windowsill, its eyes fixed in a green trance, the membranes of its ears only recording cat-sounds, and in any case not functioning just then; passed a pressing and cleaning outfit, the last pair of trousers of the day going into the steaming press. So the white tobacco-smoke continued to curl against the snowy hair, and the old man's smokey eyes saw nothing, the cat continued immobile and unresponsive as a monument, and the steam issuing from the ultimate pair of trousers put a veil over the window, on the other side of which passed the glittering procession.

In spite of the lack of response, the blast and percussion continued to assault this quiet, unimportant street. Pullman and Satters, with a ricketty swagger, followed in the wake of the haughtily-mincing bare-footed rear-guard.

Meanwhile, the bodies of both Satters and Pullman were subject to internal disturbances of some violence. Satters' face was twisted into the mask of a baby afflicted with wind, the distended eyes a big angry question-mark. But he goosestepped crazily along nevertheless—he seemed to have grown physically competent in spite of his grimace. But Pullman was anything but immune. None of his muscular and glandular prickings, the wrenching of his innards, qualified for agonised reportage on his face; but he had put the amazed question to himself, "What for Pete's sake is all this?" Then a sensation, originating in the bladder, gave him a clue: for neither the bladder nor intestines had played any part in his life in the camp. He had not made water since his death on earth. Satters whispered, hoarse and urgent. "I must find a urinal!"

Like the personnel of a circus parading a mediterranean city, the Bailiff's big drums, thudding like artillery, wheeled into a grandiose boulevard.

"Is this Heaven?" Pullman at last blankly enquired of the air. It reminded him of Barcelona. This, like the Rambla, was a tree-lined avenue with huge pavements, across which cafes thrust hundreds of tables and chairs, to the edge of the gutter. Thousands of people overflowed the cafe terraces. Pullman's reaction to this scene, so unexpectedly the reverse of what the imagination demanded, was an explosion of hysterical mirth.

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"It's not a laughing matter!" protested Satters angrily. "I can't hold out much longer. I shall just make use of the nearest tree, like a little dog!"

"I was not laughing at that, silly," said Pullman contemptuously.

Several thousand *chapeaux melons* must have been manufactured in a celestial factory, Pullman reasoned; for that number now sat upon as many heads of a massive swarm of cafe-customers. A mild steady roar came up from this compact collection of unreal-looking people, discharging millions of vocables per minute under their *chapeaux melons.*

As they began to pass the lines of tables nearest the road, faces came into view. They were the faces of nonentities; this humanity was alarmingly sub-normal, all pig-eye or owlish vacuity. Was this a population of idiots—astonishingly well-dressed; as noticeably so as the contemporary English are seedy or "utility" clad? Yet this selective mediocrity laughed abnormally and its voice was high. And then Pullman saw a freckled face with its mouth open and its eyes fixed upon him. The man was holding a siphon aloft. He pulled the trigger, and a parabola of sodawater ascended into the air, and fell upon the side of Satters' neck, beneath the ear. It had been at Satters that the siphoneer had been looking. The effervescent liquid rushed down, inside and outside of his shirt collar.

Satters did not regard this as funny, either. His hands tearing at his neck, he stamped up and down, roaring at the siphoneer, "You stupid cad! I'm half a mind to come and wring your bloody neck! If you don't take that grin off your face I'll knock your teeth down your throat for you. Silly fool!"

But the cortege had moved on, and Pullman took his young friend by the arm and led him towards a vacant table at a respectful distance from that of the man with the siphon. About to sit down, Pullman remembered that they had no money.

A man who was seated at the next table rose at this juncture and raised his hat, addressing Pullman. "I witnessed your arrival. I saw the siphon episode"—with a smile. "My name is Mannock," the stranger said. "You have just arrived, I think from the camp outside the city. May I offer you both a drink, to start with; you must be entirely without money."

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But Satters broke in excitedly: "I say, I just can't wait any longer!" He was stamping about, with his hands in his trousers pockets. "I know what is the matter," exclaimed Mr. Mannock. "Come along with me."

He led them briskly into the cafe, up to a door upon which they read the familiar word GENTLEMEN. They followed him in, and found themselves in a sumptuous place of gentlemanly retirement, fortunately empty at the moment. After the more urgent exercises, the two newcomers plunged their faces in warm water, next washed their mud-caked hands, and Pullman, with one of the lavatory combs, imparted to his hair the backward wave which most became him. Outside, Mannock waited for them. "I should have said," announced Pullman, "that my young friend's name is Satterthwaite, and I am James Pullman."

There was a certain high condescension in James Pullman's manner which did not escape Mannock. That gentleman decided that the clue to it was probably to be found in the beard Pullman wore, but refrained from further speculation for the present.

They returned to the table, where Mannock ordered for them a mysterious drink. It was strangely delicious. It was unlike anything they had ever tasted.

"There is no alcohol here," he told them, "but I assure you you will not need it. They say that New York is stimulating, don't they? Well, this is often ten times more so. A cup of coffee, for instance, causes you to feel quite unnaturally stimulated."

When they had sat there for a short while, Mannock informed them that he lived not far away. "Unless you have a date for dinner with the Bailiff, will you dine with me? You do not have to feel embarrassed here about money, by the way. You are given —it is quite automatic—the wherewithal to live. It is not an equalitarian institution," he smiled. "Except for that fact, you ask for what you want and they give it to you. I mean a man who was a crossing sweep on earth will not get so big a bundle of notes as you will, or as I do."

Pullman accepted with alacrity the invitation to dinner. They shortly left the cafe and started walking up a street running at right angles to the Boulevard, and along the side of the cafe. Almost at once Pullman turned to Mannock and asked him politely, "Is this Heaven?"

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"No, this is not Heaven," was Mannock's toneless rejoinder.

"If it is not Heaven, what is it?"

Somewhat embarrassed, after hesitating, Mannock replied. "The usual question! It is not easy to answer that question, and I suggest we wait a little before tackling it."

"I have another question to ask," announced Pullman. "What is the matter with all the people here? Are all the people in that cafe imbeciles? And if so, why?"

Mannock laughed obstreperously. "Yes, yes, they are all nitwits—their I.Q. level is so low that it may be said not to exist. But they get through life all right, which is mainly because they all, whether young or old (and most of them were young when they started) receive a pension—adequate to keep them at that cafe all day. Some of them may have been a little intelligent, say thirty years ago—though I doubt it—but thirty years at that cafe . . ."

"I see . . . or rather I don't see, but it doesn't matter." Pullman showed by his expression that, without being satisfied, he understood that his query had been answered.

"You will soon know all that it is good for you to know," Mannock cryptically remarked.

They met with several specimens of that mankind whose weapon was soda-water, and whose faces were like the silly saints in the iconography of a swabian half-wit. All proudly wore hats; for they had belonged to a hatless generation when alive, so impoverished by two cataclysms that even the tweed-cap had to be foregone. The first figure, open-mouthed, blandly grinning, as though welcoming any nonsense, ambled past in newly-tailored clothes. Next came two figures, beautifully hatted (a maroon-pink), ties like a japanese battle in a stylistic print; they chattered to one another about the socks in noughts and crosses of the ingenious Henry. They frowned and grinned, their hollow noses wagging, and always the black hole of the mouth. Lastly came three who had not the vigour to think about a sock. Their mouths hung open beneath stupidly smiling eyes, their skins like vellum, their teeth like a mummy's; they encouraged one another to laugh —for if you cannot think you can always laugh—at the stars. They seemed to believe that these were bubbles of light, and that they might at any moment burst. Pullman would have said that they were showing off for the benefit of the strangers, but they

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seemed too absorbed in themselves to be doing that: their eyes, also, looked aloof and demented. Something that struck one about all these people was that their faces were youthful. They were such as a young man would get if he had been young for a very long time, until the skin had come to look like parchment. Pullman found it difficult to decide whether these people were young or old. But he supposed it was the former. A curious circumstance was that the face of their cicerone, who was a man of fifty, was natural and fresh, though possessing no colour.

"Vacuous as London is," Pullman observed, "it does not manufacture a citizenry so mentally void as you do."

Their guide received this with a laugh, so harsh and troubled that Satters was visited with an icy touch of gooseflesh, and Pullman glanced sideways enquiringly. Were these skeletons in somebody's cupboard? Was Mannock responsible for this lunacy? Mannock's voice was as uneasy as his laugh had been, and all he said was, "We are not all like that."

The street in which Mannock lived was named Habakkuk, and was distant five, or was it six, blocks from the Boulevard. It was eminently urbane and inviting: it had been built for people of the social tastes and economic competence of the gentleman who was acting as their shepherd. It still looked suave and respectable; but Pullman was unable to rid himself of an unpleasant sensation as he reflected that most of the ambling figures dotted up and down Habakkuk were idiotic if not idiots, thought the stars would burst, and wore neckties reproducing the visual excitements of a samurai battle. It did not make him any happier to notice in the middle of the road, nestling between the cobbles, a cluster of violets peaceably growing. The almost total absence of traffic was somehow not very cheering. The coming and going of commercial life would have been preferable to this stagnation and isolation.

No. 55 had a porte cochere, like so many of the houses in these trafficless streets. Mannock led the way, turned to the right, and, with an unexpected agility, mounted to the first floor. He turned his key in the lock, calling out to his Greek house-boy as he went into the hall. Pullman felt relieved, for what he now designated the normal was manifest. Evidently their guide was *not* as others were in this city. What a valuable friend this was to have made under the circumstances. . . . He noted, too, that it was a very

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large and handsome apartment. How did this very superior, sensible Englishman come to be living in such a way, and in such a neighbourhood? This was a normal human being, but hemmed in by what they had seen.

"I have two guests for dinner, Platon." A gritty voice was heard somewhere within, in guttural response. "A young Greek looks after me. He was batman to a friend of mine. Odd, is it not!"

Neither Pullman nor Satters said a great deal: they listened, and adjusted themselves, marvelling at what they found. But at last, as they were all seated comfortably in Mannock's rather impressively large living-room, Pullman observed: "Much that is here is very strange, we know, but making allowance for that, life in this city does in fact reproduce life-on-earth as near as damn it, does it not?"

"That," Mannock answered, "is the idea, with several very important modifications."

"Yes, of course," rejoined the attentive Pullman. "Of course."

"Which," Mannock ended, "really makes all the difference."

Pullman and Mannock looked at one another, as if hesitating to make the next remark. Then at last the former spoke.

"Are these differences changes for the better?"

"That," Mannock answered, "is a question each man must answer for himself. The central fact is that time does not exist here. Or it exists in a kind of unprogressive way, it halts one at one's earthly self, at some specific date. I have been here twenty years, for instance. But, if I look at myself in the mirror, I am quite unchanged. I have exactly the same number of grey hairs that I had twenty years ago. This is a little disconcerting. I am just as active as I was twenty years ago." He paused. "There is a further circumstance it is necessary to stress. When I died . . . on earth . . . I was much older than I am now."

There was a silence. Then Satters spoke in a hushed, automatic voice. "On earth, when I died, I was . . . I was . . . well, an old man."

Pullman laughed, a brief, dry laugh. "I seem to recall," he said, "to speak of myself, that I was about sixty-five years old when I died. I felt, I remember, about the age I appear to be now. It is very queer, is it not?"

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Satters shuddered, then burst into tears.

"No queerer than life," said Mannock. "But no less queer." He and Pullman laughed, but Satters continued sobbing.

They all sat silent for a while. Pullman was digesting what he had heard. But there were so many other questions which now crowded into his mind, that he thought he had better do no more catechising for the moment.

"Let me find out about dinner," said Mannock, rising; and he left the room.

Satters stretched, then said, leaning over towards his friend, in a confidential voice: "Pulley, this is a rum go, isn't it? I am so glad we are together . . . I mean that you are here. It is all so strange." He stopped, massaging his face, as if to make sure of its fleshly reality. He even pulled his heavy loose red lips out a few inches and released them as if they had been indiarubber. "What is the rummiest thing about this place is that it is so . . . so . . ."

"So like all other places," Pullman suggested; "you are thinking of the Cabinet de Toilette? I mean the washing and urinating place in the cafe."

"Yes, Pulley! You feel that too, do you, Pulley?"

"Oh yes. It is much more frightening than if it were . . . if there had been no lavatory in the cafe, if people did not function as we function. That *Gentleman's* in the cafe was so welcome, so tremendously welcome, that one forgot to say to oneself, *Where am I? What is this doing here?*"

Satters sprang up, saying in a stage whisper, "I say, do you suppose he has a can here?" He began walking about. Pullman got to his feet, but at that moment Mannock returned. "My young friend would like . . ." Pullman began.

"Oh yes. Come along. I'll show you." And Mannock led Satters through a bath-room to a most desirable water-closet.

"Thanks awfully," Satters gushed.

Mannock went back to his other guest with a smile of understanding. "The very old, and the very young, suffer from the same disability . . ." he observed.

"Satters was my fag at school," Pullman told him. "And it seems that he remains a fag now."

Mannock nodded. "That is so," he said. "It is his role, I fear, to be a schoolboy. If he is still here in a thousand years he will

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still be a big plump fag, inclined to be incontinent." They laughed. There were heavy steps outside. The door opened, and Satters stamped back into the room, smiling bashfully—with a deliberate, rather dirty bashfulness.

"I was going to say," Mannock explained, "there *is* plenty to eat, happily."

The guests demonstrated gratitude simultaneously, Satters with the obstreperousness of hearty youth, Pullman with restraint. When they sat down at the dinner-table, Mannock said grace, which put a damper on Satters who was ravenous and had sat down making no secret of the fact—exclaiming, "Our first meal for months, what, Pulley!"

The soup was a superb minestrone, and a second helping was not declined by Satters. "You can obtain plenty of fresh vegetables, I see," Pullman remarked.

"All we want. Most people to begin with complain that there is no meat."

"What, no meat!" Consternation was soon replaced in Satters' face by another expression. "Oh, I see. You are a vegetarian, sir. Are there many vegetarians here?"

"All are vegetarians, perforce. There is no meat to be had. But unless you are inveterately carnivorous, you will soon forget that."

The next course was Mushrooms à la Grecque, combined with aubergines so elaborately flavoured that even Satters was satisfied.

"No, there is no meat, no women, no alcohol, no telephones (except public ones in the street), practically no taxicabs and so on," Mannock went on. "There is a good deal of homosexuality. And, as I have said, the air is like champagne! It might be worse! It might be very much worse!"

Satters appeared to have cheered up: and Pulley wore a less preoccupied look. "It sounds like life on the Falkland Islands or in Admiralty Bay, if you added a mirage of Zurich or Barcelona. I shall not complain," he observed smiling, "if I only can get some money."

"You will be in possession of that tomorrow morning. I will accompany you to the bank." Mannock held up a finger. "The profit motive is another absentee. There are those financial restraints, of an absolute kind. None that disturb me. But if I were a financial wizard I should be very miserable in this place. I should ask scornfully, 'Is this Heaven!' "

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"But it is not Heaven, is it?" Pullman enquired. "I apologise for returning to that point!"

A strange expression came into Mannock's face. "No, as I said before, this is not Heaven. The set-up here is as follows—and this is to simplify very much indeed: if you thought of this as a Sultanate, social life centering in the Palace and around the person of the Sultan, you would be near the mark. The Sultan is called the Padishah. This, the linchpin of everything, is a splendid human being (we may think of him as that), utterly involved with our spatial and temporal system. He shares our mortality, up to a point. He is super-natural, endowed with magical powers of the most enormous kind. The Padishah does not know how long he has been alive. 'Far too long!' he laughs. Anyway, several thousand years. He has the aspect of a young man of thirty. We know nothing for certain, but he is generally assumed, though not divine, to belong to the divine order. He discourages very firmly anything *venerational*. Only God should be venerated, he tells you. I have heard him say that there is not so much veneration in the world that any can be spared from the service of the Deity."

This account of things greatly surprised Pullman. This super-natural potentate aroused his curiosity. "What an extraordinary being!" he exclaimed. "How do you happen to come to know all this?" he added sillily.

"Oh, if you live long enough in a city, down on earth you know, you find out all about it. It is the same here."

After dinner they moved back into the living-room.

Satters having been put on his road to the water-closet once more (an event which invariably produced the same atmosphere of grown-up geniality), Pullman said, "I am all at sea, and, I must confess, profoundly alarmed."

Mannock smiled with sympathetic condescension, but with a tinge of displeasure, Pullman thought.

"Everything to do with human life is, was, and always will be a little terrifying," he observed. "But I do not think that there is anything here to alarm anybody, more than he had reason to be alarmed by earthly existence."

"I imagine you have got quite used to finding the streets full of imbeciles. You seem to accept what you cannot alter. I must, I suppose, wait until I know more."

"Yes."

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At this point there was the sound of feet outside, and a deep voice; followed by the entrance of a tall figure, one, Pullman felt, apt to instill uneasiness in those about it. It represented one of those combinations of the rugged and the intellectual which make other men feel that they must be on guard. Thinning hair, a bulging forehead, a voice organ-toned, a large intelligent eye, an obvious indifference to details of toilet, plus a six-foot evidence of bones which were raw and large: what but discomfort can come of such a combination?

"This is John Rigate," Pullman was told; and the latter got ready to be badly bored—noisily, muscularly, aggressively bored. But though opinionated as a rhinoceros, Rigate did not produce the effect anticipated.

"Pullman has just arrived. We were engaged in discussing the Third City. Pullman has confessed to some alarm. We were, as you see, in troubled waters."

Rigate gave a frosty, sceptical laugh.

"Let me give you the low-down," he told Pullman. "There is every reason for alarm. You are in a degenerate, chaotic outpost of Heaven. The ostensible ruler, the Padishah, is a supernatural being of great charm, but devoid of the slightest trace of gumption. If some selection were exercised at the camp in passing in the applicants, things might rub along all right. It is very difficult for men to live without working. But the planning of life here is nonsensical from beginning to end. Stupidest of all is *immortality,* or how can I describe it? The age-business. I can quite see that they do not wish to reproduce here all the mechanism of growing old, of demise, of coffins or cemeteries, and so on. But we none of us stop here terribly long. There is no man in the city who has been here sixty years. What happens to us after this? Not that anyone much cares. The entire show is one great farce. It is far sillier even than life on earth—for at least that was centred upon the mechanical purpose of perpetuating the species. Someone or something seemed crazily set upon *that* happening. There is no *entêtement* of that kind here. Provided with money by the State, we exist in suspended animation, sexless, vegetarian, and dry, permanently forty-six. If you can see any sense in it, I can't."

Pullman smiled. He said, "Have you any theory as to how all

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this has come about? It is too irrational to be deliberate. Was not this City to be something else?"

Rigate moved his uncouth body in a spasm of restraint, and did not answer. Mannock replied. "Rigate thinks," he said, "that this is an outpost of celestial paradise, in the charge of a great angel (the Padishah). A beautiful, ineffectual angel, he would say."

"I see," said Pullman.

"It is," Rigate intervened, "the decay of a once sensible or more sensible, system; that is all I can suppose. Perhaps this was a place where dubious Christians were tried out, and subsequently either handed over to the Fiend, or promoted to a more select place. As it is, what are these other cities? Is City One a City of the Saints? But *this* magnetised metropolis has obviously lost its rationale."

There was a considerable silence after this. Pullman felt how unnatural it was for men, or for Englishmen, without a pipe or something, to remain silent and relatively immobile. There was something sinister about it.

"What is your view, Mannock?" Pullman almost shouted.

"You won't get anything out of *him*," Rigate laughed, a cold blast. "He is in the confidence of the Padishah."

Pullman looked over towards Mannock, whose face wore an enigmatic smile. It was clear, Pullman reflected, that Mannock tended to encourage the belief that he had access to information denied to ordinary citizens; that he had a pipe-line to the Palace.

"I was at the Bailiff's tonight," Rigate suddenly announced. Mannock looked up quickly, not very pleased, it was evident. "Again? What on earth for?" he asked.

"Oh, you know why. To get a glass or two of whiskey. And I have a piece of news, of supernatural origin, too. Lucifer is planning an all-out attack upon this effete institution. At the head of all his flies and vermin, and with the help of a huge fifth column within the Gates. There is a lot of brash bragging from Hades, as usual. The Old Devil boasts that he will capture the Padishah, and confine him among the fulgurous mountains of hell, where he will be crawled over by obscene reptiles and raped by fearful serpent-women."

There was another, rather painful, silence, as it seemed to Pull-

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man. In the middle of it came the sound of porcine snores, ending in an abrupt snort. Satters had fallen asleep shortly after Rigate's entrance. Mannock had given the snorer a kick, and was obviously getting cross, and he now took Rigate to task.

"Why do you repeat these threats, Rigate? They spread these rumours as a matter of routine. Flies do not take cities."

"That is true, but the Master of Hell has enormous insects the size of this house."

"They would be blown away. *And,*" barked Mannock, "if you don't think the best-armed police *I* personally have ever seen, is not capable of discouraging our Fifth Column. . . ! "

After a pause, Rigate remarked, "I repeated that rumour because it was especially circumstantial, and the devil who told me believed it to be true."

Mannock appeared to have forgotten Pullman's presence. His face expressed frustration and annoyance, in equal measure. He was sourly scrutinising the countenance of this old friend as if he had to be reconsidered as an intimate.

"In the event of such an attack as you report to be imminent, upon whose side would *you* be?" he asked Rigate harshly.

"Don't be childish," Rigate barked brightly, "I am of course a great adherent of Old Nick, and long for him to come and turn this dull dump into a proper hell. That stands to reason, doesn't it?"

"I just thought I would ask you."

"But *I,*" Rigate complained, "am in no one's confidence. I am given no opportunity of enrolling myself in the defence of the City. No one informs me what is the philosophy of the City, in contrast to the well-known tenets of Satan; they have never been stated. Everything is taken for granted. No, we are consulted about nothing. Our co-operation, our participation, is not solicited. We are treated like packages."

Mannock yawned. "It is very high-handed of the Padishah not to consult you, Rigate. . . "

Rigate gave an earthquake of a laugh as he rose preparatory to departure. "Mannock and I do not see eye to eye regarding the supernatural autocrat," he told Pullman. "I want too much, I expect. I am a *rentier.* I do not have to work for my living. What more do I want?"

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When he had gone, Mannock remarked: "Rigate persists in treating this place as an anglo-saxon commonwealth. Also, he listens to the propaganda he hears at the Bailiff's."

"I see." Pullman did not see, but everyone seemed to suppose here that you ought to know if you didn't. But what had interested Pullman was Rigate's theory that they had somehow found their way, posthumously, into a decayed sub-celestial system, on the eve of destruction by infernal agency. What this *meant* he could not imagine. The more he listened to these people the more puzzled he became. He thought of the scene outside the City gates when he and Satters were alone with the implacable, starry face of these regions of the universe. Here inside, surrounded by man again, their perspective was unreal, was falsely human. These were unearthly regions, and their position a truly fearful one.

Pullman looked over towards his host and smiled. "My ex-fag appears to be exhausted. I am sorry he made that frightful noise."

"Oh, that's all right. . ." Mannock seemed a little pre-occupied.

"I think we had better both go to bed, for I feel a little tired myself." Pullman stretched and got to his feet. Mannock led him into a large room in which there were two comfortable beds. "Is this all right?" he asked. "I have not two single rooms, I am sorry to say." But Pullman begged him not to think of anything of that sort—that this was far more than adequate and they were very lucky to have chanced upon so hospitable a person as himself.

[*To be continued in the next issue*]

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T. S. ELIOT

A Note on *Monstre Gai*

MONSTRE GAI IS A SEQUEL, or continuation of *The Childermass,* and *Monstre Gai* also is to have a sequel. This much is common knowledge. But many people will read *Monstre Gai* who will not have read *The Childermass,* which was published in 1928 and has been for some years out of print: for a younger generation, certainly for those who do not live near a library possessing a copy of the book, *The Childermass* is only a name, the name of a lost work known only in critical citations. While awaiting republication we do not, fortunately, need to have read *The Childermass* in order to understand what *Monstre Gai* is about. We need to know that it is a work not only of imagination but of fantasy, like the romances of Rabelais and Swift, to which it will in due course be compared, though with little relevance. For Mr. Lewis has set himself a much more difficult feat to carry out than that of either of these authors. If, for instance, one chooses to deposit a human being among a race of people either very much bigger or very much smaller than himself, or if one chooses to depict the adventures of a colossus or a midget among human beings, the *mechanics* of the story is not very difficult. The author has only to take care to have everything to scale; and the imaginative genius consists in making us feel what it would be like to be a giant among ordinary human beings, or an ordinary human being among giants. But Mr. Lewis has chosen to take his human beings—Pullman and his ex-fag Satterthwaite, who first make their appearance in *The Childermass,* and continue their adventures in *Monstre Gai*—to the world beyond the grave; and not as excursionists like Dante, but as denizens. They are not only among the dead but are ghosts themselves; so that, unlike Dante and Rabelais and Swift, Mr. Lewis has to do without the normal standards of consistency. This makes the mechanism of the story much more difficult to construct. Mr. Lewis has, I believe, come as near as possible to triumphing over such difficulties; and when we consider how

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numerous these difficulties are, our respect for what he has actutually done will be all the greater.

At the opening of *The Childermass* Pullman and Satterthwaite (usually known as Pulley and Satters) whose paths have hardly crossed since schooldays, find themselves in "the Camp"—a kind of Transit Camp where the newly dead sojourn for a time, before being drafted off to other destinations—on the hither bank of a river analogous to that which Virgil and Dante had to cross. At the point at which *Monstre Gai* begins, the pair of them have succeeded in smuggling themselves across the river, and are discovered just outside the Magnetic City to which they seek to gain admittance. For the hope of admission, they depend upon attaching themselves to the retinue of an ambiguous figure, a personage of authority, called the Bailiff. This Bailiff played an important part in *The Childermass,* and plays a still more important part in *Monstre Gai,* for he is in fact himself the *monstre gai.* And that, really, is all that the new reader who has not read *The Childermass* needs to know about *Monstre Gai* before he opens the book.

I hope that after *Monstre Gai* and its successor (for we are promised a third volume of this vast supernatural saga) have been assimilated, *The Childermass* may be re-published without further delay. I write "after" with some emphasis; having re-read *The Childermass* after reading *Monstre Gai,* I believe the sequel to be a better introduction to its forerunner, than the other way about. For *Monstre Gai* is, I am convinced, a much better piece of construction. *The Childermass* strikes me—now that I have its sequel to compare it with—as a brilliant, a long, an interminable opening chapter or first scene, a first scene which breaks off abruptly at the end of a dialogue—or is the dialogue really ended? At the end, we still do not know enough about the characters to be quite sure what the author is up to. The reader's attention is held by the power of the style, the vividness of the pictures (the *peons,* as a detail, are unforgettable) and the brilliance of the debate. And yet, at the end, we have begun to be a bit impatient at being kept waiting so long, we know not for what. *Monstre Gai,* on the other hand, tells a story, and is filled with what it is an understatement to call exciting episodes—in a more serious dimension than that of "Space Fiction".

The story gets moving at once, and it moves in a definite direc-

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tion. And beyond the structural improvement, the much greater skill at plain story-telling, I think I find a more important difference still: there is, it seems to me, as in other of Mr. Lewis's recent writing (*Rotting Hill, The Writer and the Absolute, Self Condemned*), a gain in *maturity*. I do not mean that *The Childermass,* or any of the author's earlier published writings, could strike any reader as immature. The comparison reflects no discredit on earlier work. *Troilus and Cressida, Antony and Cleopatra,* or *Coriolanus,* any of these is a more mature work than *Hamlet*—to say nothing of *Romeo and Juliet:* but one does not therefore wish the earlier plays to be other than what they are, or for this reason adjudge them to be imperfect. *Self Condemned* is a much more mature work than *Tarr,* and at the age at which I now find myself I prefer the later book: yet it is not so startlingly original, not in the same way "epoch-making" (no artist can make more than one epoch, after all, however many surprises he springs). And the difference in maturity between *The Childermass* and *Monstre Gai* is not merely that the philosophy is riper or more explicit or more coherent: there is, I believe, also a development in humanity. In the first part of *The Childermass* one is too often, and too irritatingly reminded that Pulley and Satters belong to Mr. Lewis's puppet-gallery.[1] It is not that their creator *failed* to make them real—it is that he *denied* them more than a measure of reality. Just as one of them seemed about to behave like a human being, instead of like a caricature (though a caricature which only Lewis could have drawn) the author would give a little twitch of the string (and how often, and how tiresomely, we are reminded that Pulley is a "little" man) to put him in his place: "if you are going to try to behave like human beings, I'll slap you back into your puppet box."

In *Monstre Gai* the puppets begin to get the better of the puppet-master, and to become human beings—or we may say, in their less substantial but yet not indestructible new world, ex-human beings. There is even a moment suggestive of the high tragedy of *Self Condemned* (a book of almost unbearable spiritual agony) when Pulley suspects that in his behaviour during his stay in the Magnetic City he has been repeating the pattern of the life he had chosen on earth—only here the supernatural reveals

[1]See Hugh Kenner's excellent study, *Wyndham Lewis* (New Directions).

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itself, and Good and Evil can no longer be disguised, now that the choice has been irrevocably made.

The reference to *Self Condemned* leads me to another point. Mr. Lewis's eminence as both painter and writer has tended to mask the variety of his work in both arts. I mean that while recognising his gifts in both painting and writing, people may overlook the variety of his achievement as a painter and the variety of his achievement as a writer. As a painter and draughtsman Mr. Lewis, unlike Picasso, Dior or other fashionable designers, has never been concerned with finding a new style for next spring. In his pictures, and in his prose, he has sought all his life to explore the possibilities of a number of different forms of expression: it is his strict awareness of the limitations of each of the several forms he has employed, that has driven him to make use of the others. But none of these forms represents a "phase", none is ever finally abandoned: the painter, draughtsman or writer would return to any of them when it suited his purpose. Such a range of powers has its penalties. It is easily belittled: it is easily dismissed as virtuosity (implying a shallow slickness) or as amateurism—implying that a man who does several things must do all of them badly. (Goethe, by the way, was certainly an "amateur" in the theatre.) And even the admirers of such a man may be selective in their admiration. But you can't treat Wyndham Lewis like that, any more than you can Goethe or Leonardo. (As for Leonardo, that formidable and unpleasant personality, the simpering madonnas and epicene saints of his famous canvases are obviously phantasms of the same brain that conceived the flying machine, the submarine, and other subversive contraptions.) When you read one kind of prose work by Mr. Lewis (let us say, *Time and Western Man,* or *The Apes of God,* or *The Revenge for Love,* as instances of three different *genres*) you should remind yourself that the author has chosen this particular *genre* as the best for the purpose in hand, but that he can do a number of other things quite as well, and that the mind which conceives and executes them all is one. As for "the novel", it is well known that I am not a novel reader, that there are notable novelists with whose work I have only a partial acquaintance, and others with whose work I have no expectation of acquainting myself at all: so I can only *suspect* that Mr. Lewis is the most

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distinguished living English novelist. With Mr. Lewis's critical opinions, on contemporary society, art and letters and philosophy, I usually expect to find myself in agreement. As for his own philosophy (and theology—for I cannot accept his affirmation of the stupidity of Angels) he does make me think. There are some writers who please me because they seem to hold the same views as myself, others who annoy me by maintaining opinions that seem to me manifestly silly, but very few who can set my sluggish brain in motion, and for that I am always grateful. The opinion to which I do not hesitate to commit myself, is that Mr. Lewis is the greatest prose master of style of my generation—perhaps the only one to have invented a new style. And by "style" I do not mean "craftsmanship" nor do I impute impeccability. (James Joyce was the greatest *non*-stylist, the master of the vacuum of personal style into which all things rush.) I have observed that Mr. Lewis has this in common with Henry James: that when people write sympathetically or appreciatively about him, they tend to mimic his style. I detect traces of this mimicry—more properly, *magnetism*—in the recent book by Mr. Hugh Kenner. I detect traces in this piece that I have just written: you may have noticed that it is not quite in my *Times-Literary-Supplement*-leading-article manner.

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JOHN HOLLOWAY

The Petty Testament of Peter the Clerk

Now it is time I made my will.
I choose damned fools and charlatans
To start with: boasters, loud-voiced men,
Pedants, intriguers, go-betweens:—
No doubt it's quite impossible
To help that many; but what I can,
I'll do. I'll leave them all the share
I have of all the things they are.

And I believe that I can say
That of their virtues I have more
Than I once thought. Having been blind.
Although a great deal less, I'm sure
(At least I hope I'm sure) than they
See in me: each thing seeks its kind.
And if so many get too little,
Why, let them make it more: with spittle.

After all, that's how they were made
Themselves (saliva and some dust)
By God: that's part of Holy Writ
I'm quite prepared to take on trust.
I'd help them:—let them ply their trade,
And grovel in the filth, and spit,
And knead their scrapings into men.
—By that time I shall have done.

But I have other virtues that
I've cultivated here and there:
Industry, pride and tolerance,
A love of detail, and a care
For what is true, rather than what
Just seems to be so at first glance;
And yet, of these perhaps I've least
Of all men—it's a sad bequest.

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I will, then, that it take effect
Only for those white blackbirds who
Already seem to have a store
Of all such qualities: I do
So because then I can expect
My kindliness will make it more
In each of them: not one will have
Enough to scorn even what I give.

And for the time when I am gone
Wherever it is I go, I have
More detailed wishes: whose contents
Pray note; for I desire to leave
A formal garden, clipped and clean
—Something out of the Age of Sense—
Not just more racket, dirt, and jumble
Where footsore men can blind and stumble.

First, for my body: my will
(Which I now formally declare)
Is, it be stripped of clothes and leather
And, with no fuss, be laid quite bare
Less than a foot below the soil:
To which by action of the weather
It may revert; for it's no harm
To put things back where they come from.

Item, for my immortal part,
Being unsure of its size and feature,
I leave this question in abeyance,
Till I can better grasp its nature.
But some time after I depart,
Why, go to ask at any seance:
If I find I cannot go
To tell you—*cadit quaestio.*

But I suspect that all this kind
Of talk is upside-down; and when
We die, the immortal body fuses
Into a worm, into a hen,

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A root, leaf, blossom—this I find
Likelier than metempsychosis.
As for the soul, I tell you what:
It's there, but it's the mortal part.

Item, I now bequeath my wife
All the things no one else will want:
Bits from my pocket, souvenirs, scraps
Of paper, first drafts, things that don't
Make sense unless you know the life
They fitted in to. Then perhaps,
When you do know, can make the most
Sense, and re-make its meaning best.

And to my children I bequeath
My name; and bid them keep it clean:
Not one half lacquered, one half rust,
Which is, I fear, what I have done,
But keep it trim and tidy with
A modest, half-indifferent trust
In down-to-earth things, common-sense.
Just as I hoped I might do, once.

Item, my money: let it go
To those who'll spend it in one day,
Or those who'll let the pittance lie,
Thirsting for interest. Either way
It'll do no harm at all, I know.
Or have it foisted lavishly
On those I hate; and let them fret
All night what they'll get out of it.

Item, whatever friends I can
Still muster, I leave lonely folk:
Yet doubt that this will serve their ends;
For the blind groping of the root
To find its soil, strikes everyone
At first for lack of, then through friends.
And mine (although I'm glad to call
Them friends) aren't more than typical.

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To poets I leave every work
I have of learning: for the pure
Blaze of the flower, up from the earth
Makes verse. But let them use manure.
Gossip, plain women, drink and smoke
Will breed, they'll find, a monstrous birth.
I leave all verse to men of letters:
That they may plainly tell their betters.

To my employers—*viz.*, the State,
I leave this list of the mistakes
That I committed while their clerk:
Only observing that it makes
A longer list by far than that
Of slips *they* noticed in my work.
Whence I infer, *nosce teipsum* . . .
Of which I think the point escapes 'em.

Now for the sins I must confess:
Fearing infection, I once kept
My clean cat from a filthy child
Who suddenly read my thought, and wept.
Twice, I made love turn lust: as less
Arduous to please, and easier to jilt.
And three times (maybe oftener still)
Made a good plain man seem a fool.

But I owe stricter penitence
(Or the trim garden's rank, unweeded)
That once, for prim convention's sake
Like a rat, I slunk from all I needed,
Offered in one grave gentle glance:
Although I thought my heart would break.
It didn't though. And kind Time has
Slobbed it to rights, the way it does.

And now, alas, what is there left
Of all the things that once were mine?
For every book and every friend
And every vice and virtue's gone

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Like things left on the beach, that drift
With the blind tide away from land:
Only, I think that it will be
Some little time, before I die.

For in my thirtieth year of age,
A boaster and a loud-voiced man
Often enough, I Peter, clerk,
Being none too sound or healthy in
The mind or body, on this page
Thus write my will; and just remark
That when this bitter winter's gone,
I shall, next year, be thirty-one.

Sestina

There is a purgatory for successful men:
The clear centre of night. The rapid clock
Now loud, now soft, speeds on a hidden path.
They shun, and watch, the ceiling's hanging square.
Vainly they wish the pane's black flood might pale.
But at that hour they disbelieve in dawn.

They think of it, and it eludes them; dawn
That will restore the world to prosperous men
Speeding in railway carriages; with pale
Or rubicund faces, speeding for the clock.
Blue midday pigeons in a London square;
An evening paper; quiet; a garden path.

But now they are taken along a darker path
Threading the recurrent forest of before dawn;
And here there is no garden or busy square.
They know the passers-by: discarded men
As featureless and insignificant as a clock;
Silenter than a clock, but as blank, as pale.

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And in that dark they have to flush or pale
At those they suddenly encounter on the path
Here in the chartless wood that has no clock
(Could the earth halt, stop dead, give up its dawn?)
And women that to glimpse again, being men,
Once they strolled round all four sides of a square.

Ages ago now: that other, southern square;
Two people sauntering; tired, a little pale;
One of them glanced at enviously by men.
But the hard hands of clocks marked out their path:
A wordless meal, packing their things at dawn,
A calm leave-taking by a station clock.

They get up in the dark house, wind the clock,
Pad through the black or brilliant cubes; the square
Windows refuse to give a hint of dawn.
Yet, yet perhaps a lip of sky is pale,
Soon they can walk the snug familiar path:
Circle, circle recur: world made for men.

The rich, the confident men. They trust the clock.
Trust the known path. Buses congest their square.
Memory is pale. Dark is what comes at dawn.

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PATRICK CRUTTWELL

The Last Augustan

So like a ghost that left a grave for love . . .
The flower's fictitious bloom, the blushing of the dead . . .
The blast loud howling down the empty space . . .
With all its dark intensity of shade . . .
Wrapt in dark weeds, the refuse of the storm . . .
A mortal woman, of this fairy race . . .

How many, not knowing, would guess the right name for the author of these lines? The romantic *frisson,* the slow elegiac movement, must surely belong to—belong to almost anyone else, one would think, than to George Crabbe, who wrote them. "Pope in worsted stockings"? "Nature's sternest painter"? "Apostle of realism"?—the clichés of the text-books don't seem to fit. These lines are not put forward as typical Crabbe, but neither are they freaks. They come from a genuine part of his mind; they may stand for signs not only that Crabbe was a true poet, but also that the nature of his genius calls for analysis.

*

The lecturers and literary journalists who have celebrated—in 1954—the bicentenary of Crabbe's birth, have no doubt performed those dismal rites with rather more conviction than they did a hundred years ago—or than they did in 1932, when they celebrated the centenary of his death. Crabbe is more "accepted" than he was. He is in no need of resurrection, as he was, apparently, when the Oxford edition of his works first appeared in 1914, and its editors remarked: "It is not so much to be wondered at that Crabbe has been almost forgotten as that he should still be remembered . . ."—as he had been in the mid-Victorian years, if the evidence of Leslie Stephen is valid, who (in *Hours in a Library*) affirmed that Crabbe had lost his popularity "with the present generation". Both Stephen and the Oxford editors indi-

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cate why: Crabbe had been swamped by romanticism, "by the splendours and glories of the Romantic movement" (say the editors), by his "unfortunate disposition to the simply humdrum and commonplace" (says Stephen). And Somerset Maugham, in 1919 (*The Moon and Sixpence*), is saying the same. "Who now, for example, thinks of George Crabbe? He was a famous poet in his day. . . . He had learnt his craft at the school of Alexander Pope, and he wrote moral stories in rhymed couplets. Then came the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars, and the poets sang new songs. Mr. Crabbe continued to write moral stories in rhymed couplets. . . ." Crabbe has revived, in so far as he has, because the "splendours and glories of the Romantic movement" are no longer the accepted and only basis of poetic taste, because the "humdrum and commonplace" are not so unquestioningly taken as impossible material for poetry, because the ancient question—"Was Pope a poet?"—is no longer answered with a universal *No*. All this is elementary. But it still may be doubted if Crabbe is thoroughly "accepted", if his real distinction is felt and his real richness and variety understood. There still seems a tendency to see him as "quaint", as a "local" poet, to be linked with Benjamin Britten and Aldeburgh, as a pleasantly eccentric country clergyman, devoted to fossils and botany, a versifying Gilbert White of Selborne. These aspects exist; they are part of him, but not the centre. The centre is very different from the surface he presents, and, perhaps, wished to present.

The surface is simple. It is that of a true Augustan: an Anglican Christian of the eighteenth century, combining, as Johnson, Scott, and Jane Austen did, in fruitful blending, the stoicism of the classics with the "rational piety", the "good humour which is never at cuffs with true religion", that descends from Shaftesbury and Addison down through the central backbone of the eighteenth century. In Crabbe are all the marks of the race. He hates "enthusiasm"; he deals with the Methodist preachers exactly as Swift had dealt with their spiritual ancestors in the *Tale of a Tub*. His points of attack are Swift's: the vanity, the incoherence, the emptiness, the harm "enthusiasm" does to the mob:

> *See yonder preacher! to his people pass,*
> *Borne up and swell'd by tabernacle-gas;*
> *Much he discourses, and of various points,*

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All unconnected, void of limbs and joints;
He rails, persuades, explains, and moves the will,
By fierce, bold words, and strong mechanic skill.[1]

When Crabbe gives a quasi-portrait of himself as parson (in the fourteenth of the *Tales of the Hall*), he tells us how his parishioners shook their methodistical heads at his sermons, the discourses, said they, of a mere "moral teacher"—

'Heathens,' they said, 'can tell us right from wrong,
But to a Christian higher points belong'

—and in that encounter (it is founded on personal experience, on the differences between Crabbe and his parishioners at Trowbridge) Crabbe puts himself firmly on his side of the eighteenth century's religious quarrel: the side of reason and ethics, the opposite side from William Blake, whose *Everlasting Gospel* had said exactly what Crabbe's parishioners were saying: "There is not one Moral Virtue that Jesus Inculcated but Plato and Cicero did Inculcate before him." Crabbe, and Crabbe's congregation, were certainly unaware of Blake's saying—unaware, it is likely, of Blake's existence; that the correspondence is nevertheless so close proves how central was this quarrel in the age's experience. It was a quarrel, of course, that ramified from religion into other fields: into literature, for one, with the quarrel between sense and sensibility; into politics, for another, for the religion of enthusiasm went often with radicalism, and the ethical bias almost always with conservatism.

Such being the cast of Crabbe's mind, his literary affinities, the models and standards he consciously followed, are what we should expect. Crabbe himself was aware of those romantic notions of poetry which were to deny him the title of poet; the preface to the *Tales* discusses them with remarkable awareness and self-knowledge. He wonders if what he writes can be called poetry; takes note of contemporary definitions which would "exclude those who address their productions to the plain sense and sober judgment of their readers, rather than to their fancy and imagination"; sees (significant and acute point) that this will mean the exclusion of satire and of "narratives which are founded on real events" from the realms of "genuine poetry"; recognizes his own

[1]From Letter IV of *The Borough*.

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true forebears, the Chaucer of the *Canterbury Tales,* and the Dryden and Pope of the "characters" in verse; and finally defines the quality of the poetry which they wrote and he wrote: "this actuality of relation, this nudity of description and poetry without an atmosphere." That last most penetrating phrase gives exactly what Crabbe may have designed to write, and exactly why romantic taste could not abide him. And much of his verse is, of course, in that manner; its crisp antithetical wit, for example, comes straight from Dryden through Pope.

> *Newmarket steeds he bought at mighty cost;*
> *They sometimes won, but Blaney always lost*

—that has the ring of Dryden's couplet on Buckingham:

> *Beggar'd by fools, whom still he found too late,*
> *He had his jest, and they had his estate.*

Crabbe, indeed, explicitly disclaimed any originality of technique. In the preface to the *Tales of the Hall,* he observes (with a hint at Wordsworth and the preface to *Lyrical Ballads*) that a poet may feel inclined to write a lengthy and serious preface to his own work "when he has some favourite and peculiar style or manner which he would explain and defend"—but as for himself, he has "no peculiar notion to defend, no poetical heterodoxy to support"; the metre he has used "is probably the most common measure in our language". He seems positively anxious to present himself as thoroughly conventional.

Perhaps too anxious. The work of the man who wrote the lines given at the head of this article—and who also wrote *Peter Grimes* —is not to be covered by such a definition as "poetry without an atmosphere": whatever he himself may have thought of it. Something deeper was there; and what it was we may learn from a personal experience he has left on record, and the poem he made from it.

In the summer of 1817 Crabbe was in London. That season was the climax of his strange career. The great success of the *Tales* had made him a social lion. He who had begun in a home of poverty and unhappiness, been a most reluctant (and incompetent) country surgeon, known the miseries of hawking his verse from patron to patron till Burke delivered him, enjoyed and

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suffered from the equivocal career of chaplain in a ducal house, and then lapsed for more than twenty years into the obscurity of rural parsonages before reappearing as a published author, was now the guest of Moore and Rogers and Holland House. The small quiet elderly man in his old-fashioned clerical dress ("looking like a French abbé," says Lockhart) dined out incessantly, took part in elegant conversations "on the effect of high polish on minds, chiefly female"—and kept a journal. And in the journal, for the 21st of July, he recorded this:

> I would not appear to myself superstitious. I returned late last night, and my reflections were as cheerful as such company could make them, and not, I am afraid, of the most humiliating kind; yet, for the first time these many nights, I was incommoded by dreams, such as would cure vanity for a time in any mind where they could gain admission. Some of Baxter's mortifying sprites whispered very singular combinations. None, indeed, that actually did happen in the very worst of times, but still with a formidable resemblance. It is doubtless very proper to have the mind thus brought to a sense of its real and possible alliances, and the evils it has encountered, or might have had; but why these images should be given at a time when the thoughts, the waking thoughts, were of so opposite a nature, I cannot account. So it was. Awake, I had been with the high, the apparently happy: we were very pleasantly engaged, and my last thoughts were cheerful. Asleep, all was misery and degradation, not my own only, but of those who had been. —That horrible image of servility and baseness, that mercenary and commercial manner! It is the work of imagination, I suppose; but it is very strange. I must leave it.

How long his waking mind brooded on that night, we do not know, since we do not know when he wrote the poem which unquestionably derives from it: *The World of Dreams,* not published by himself, but posthumously printed by his son. It describes a series of dreams; it begins with a prayer—

> *Spirits of Ill! your distance keep—*
> *And in your own dominions dwell,*
> *Ye, the sad emigrants from hell*

—which shows that such visitations were not uncommon. But the prayer is in vain; the dreams, which are seen as the offspring

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of guilt ("it is my sin/That thus admits the shadowy throng"), break through the resistance of failing consciousness—extraordinary in what "modern" terms Crabbe feels the experience—

My soul, subdued, admits the foe,
Perceives, and yet endures the wrong,
Resists, and yet prepares to go

—and at once, with a brilliant rendering of the sudden onset of dreaming, Crabbe takes us into the first of the dreams. This, it seems, is of a brothel; caught in "the wicked city's vilest street", surrounded by an evil and threatening crowd ("the dark-brow'd throng more near and more/With murderous looks are on me thrust"), the dreamer must pass through "the accursed door" to where he finds "that female fiend" "with tainted bosom bare". And this he has known already: "Where I have been entrapt before"—a line ambiguous in its context. Does it mean that the dream is a recurring one, or that it goes back to a real experience? Real or imaginary, she appears again at the end of the poem:

By cruel witchcraft she can drag
My struggling being in her snares . . .

Now the dream changes; it shifts to the atmosphere, "quiet, calm, serene", of a "noble mansion". But something is wrong there; the mansion is empty, "in gloom profound"; the dreamer wanders through the deserted house—"and all is silent, all is dead." That dream derives from Crabbe's experiences of the ducal splendours of Belvoir Castle, where he had been the chaplain of the Duke of Rutland; for the same terrifying, haunting contrast, between the splendour of the surroundings and the personal feeling of solitude, deadness, being out of his proper place, comes in an episode—partly autobiographical—from his poems of waking life. It comes in *The Patron* (the fifth of the *Tales*), when the hopeful young poet, deserted by the noble family who have promised him aid—they have all gone off to Town and left him in the country mansion—wanders, as the dreamer wanders, from empty room to room:

Most keenly felt our poet as he went
From room to room without a fix'd intent

—a couplet much less intense than the lines which render the dream:

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From room to room, from scene to scene,
I breathless pass, in gloom profound

—but who can doubt that the one begot the other?

From this, the dreams revert to the city, to a scene of hurry, anxiety, frustration—

Through the swelling crowd I strive
Bustling forth my way to trace:
Never fated to arrive
At the still-expected place

—which seems to derive from the period when the penniless Crabbe was trudging the London streets seeking, for long in vain, a patron for his poems. The dream does not stay there for long. Contrasting images of country peace succeed, of family reunions, and "the summer sea": but all these crossed by failure and loneliness. His brother ("my friend my brother, lost in youth") turns from him in anger ("he quits me—spurns me—with disdain"). He is alone by the shore as he had been in the mansion—

Doom'd o'er the sleeping world to stray
And not to die, and not to sleep

—(is the *Ancient Mariner* in the background here?)—and the sea as image of beauty and peace ("How beautiful this pearly sand,/That waves, and winds, and years refine") turns quickly to the sea as destroyer—

Lo! lo! they rise—and I abide
The peril of the meeting flood:
Away, away, my footsteps slide—
I pant upon the clinging mud!

The sea, of course, had always been vital to Crabbe's creation: vital especially as betrayer and destroyer, as it is in *Peter Grimes* and in *Ruth,* linked in Crabbe's mind with the brutality and misery of those who lived by it, the "bold, artful, surly, savage race" among whom he had passed his youth. Here, in *The World of Dreams,* it comes again, holding out its treasures won from "human misery", and even in that deceptive, for

Lo! whatever I can find
Grows mean and worthless as I view . . .

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The dream then returns to the mansion. It is now "a large and Gothic hall", filled with strange beings:

Kings, Caliphs, Kaisers,—silent all;
Pale as the dead; enrobed and tall,
Majestic, frozen, solemn still . . .

—and the dreamer is dining with them at table, knowing them to be dead. Nothing in the poem has greater intensity than this vision:

Now are they seated at a board
In that cold grandeur—I am there.
But what can mummied kings afford?
This is their meagre ghostly fare,
And proves what fleshless things they stare!
Yes! I am seated with the dead:
How great, and yet how mean they are!
Yes! I can scorn them while I dread.

This too comes, it would seem, from a real experience, recorded in another poem. *Silford Hall* (one of the posthumous stories) tells how a boy, the son of a poor household, visits the local mansion on an errand, and is shown by the housekeeper all over this "seat of much renown", "the glorious dwelling of a princely race". He enjoys every minute of it—save when he finds himself, by the housekeeper's forgetfulness, alone and locked in the chapel. "Dim, silent, solemn, was the scene"; "such as the halls of giant-kings" is how the boy imagines it, and the vision of hunger and death is in the poem of waking as in that of the dream—though, once again, the former is far less powerful:

For Peter judged, with monuments around,
The dead must surely in the place be found;
With cold to shiver, and with hunger pine . . .[2]

The dream-poem proceeds to a swift shuttling between visions of beauty and peace and others of urban misery, violently opposite. "A fairy being, form and dress/Brilliant as light" changes into "mean attire/Upon a shrivel'd beldame spread"; a garden

[2]We have the authority of Crabbe's son and biographer that *Silford Hall* described a real experience of Crabbe's childhood. "The story was in fact suggested by the Poet's recollection of his own boyish visits, when an apothecary's apprentice, to Cheveley, a seat of the noble family with whom, in after years, he was domesticated as Chaplain."

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full of freshness and perfume becomes a scene of "poverty extreme". This scene is the workhouse; the concrete detail that haunts the dream—

This room with that cross-parting beam
Holds yonder squalid tribe and me

had been noted more than thirty years before by the Crabbe who described the workhouse in *The Village:*

Such is that room which one rude beam divides,
And naked rafters form the sloping sides . . .

But in the earlier poem of waking observation, Crabbe is outside the scene and the life he describes; in the dream he is part of it, forced to be one of the "squalid tribe"—

And not go forth without the leave
Of him—and ask it humbly then—
Who reigns in this infernal den . . .

Nor can he pity the wretches he must live with; they deserve no pity—"poor, vile, impatient, worthless all!" Which brings to mind a confession Crabbe made in a letter of 1816, admitting the distaste he felt for that part of his clerical duties which involved him in visiting the poor. "I am disgusted where I should pity, and want to run away from the Object who expects from me Consolation and Sympathy."[3] And the poem ends, as noted, with the reappearance of the woman of its opening: seen now as a witch, horrible yet fascinating.

Three things may be safely deduced from this astonishing poem, this phantasmagoria of the whole of Crabbe's essential life. There is a feeling of desperate insecurity, a haunting conviction of being out of his proper place, made stronger and stronger in proportion as he advances with more and more triumph into the worlds of social elegance and success. There is a reluctant fascination with the squalid and horrible, which nevertheless terrify and repel. And there is a sensuality condemned and rejected by conscience and reason.[4] All three may be found in his other work;

[3]Letter dated 11th November 1816, to Elizabeth Charters.

[4]Lest it should be thought that this is too confident deduction from a single poem, Crabbe's own words in the journal may be recalled, telling us that the dreams brought him "very singular combinations. None, indeed, that actually did happen in the very worst of times, but still with a formidable resemblance."

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all contribute to its power. The true picture of Crabbe begins to look very different from its quiet parsonical surface.

Crabbe lived in a society that was rigidly stratified on the whole, but allowed the exceptions—the talented or lucky exceptions—to pass from low to high. Crabbe had made that passage—made it as sensationally and completely as possible, from the savage isolated misery of the Suffolk coast of his youth to the castle of Belvoir. He had made it, too, in what was, by the end of the eighteenth century, becoming an old-fashioned way—through the personal patronage of one great man.[5] Not only old-fashioned, but to the rising radicalism of the age, rather discreditable. Because it was "thought proper" that he should be a clergyman, he had been hastily awarded a special degree by the Archbishop of Canterbury, and promptly ordained—to become that standard figure of fun, or contempt, or pity, in the eighteenth century: the tame chaplain in the great man's house.[6] But for such a post he was by nature quite unsuited. He was proud, sensitive, Whiggish in opinions; we can only guess what humiliations lay behind the discreet remarks of his son. "He always seemed to shrink from going into oral details on the subject. . . . The situation he filled at Belvoir was attended with many painful circumstances, and productive of some of the acutest sensations of wounded pride that have ever been traced by any pen." The effects appear not only in such almost direct transcriptions from reality as *The Patron* (which Walter Scott said he would read, as an awful warning, to any of his offspring who should manifest signs of aspiring to a literary career), but also in one of the major interests of all his story-telling: an acute awareness, and brilliantly accurate rendering, of the nuances of social distinctions.

This, of course, has always been one of the great strengths of the English novel, as it is one of the great pre-occupations of English society; and in fact—it is worth remembering—Crabbe himself wrote three novels. They will not be found in any library; he destroyed them all in manuscript. He was doubtless right to do so, as he was to reject the advice of the *Edinburgh Review* that

[5]Crabbe's son testifies to the absolute and permanent transformation which Burke's patronage brought about in his protégé's career. "The short interview that ensued entirely, and for ever, changed the nature of his worldly fortunes. He was, in the common phrase, 'a made man' from that hour."

[6]Cf. Pope on "Timon's villa" and the quality of its religion:

To pray'r the cushions and soft Dean invite,
Who never mentions hell to ears polite.

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he should write a long narrative poem, a novel in verse, as it would have been; for his plots are usually no more than anecdotes, incapable of development, and his characters are imagined to fit such narrow frames: they are not, as he saw, "such as would coalesce into one body".[7] Still, when one reads his poems, it is again and again of novels, of certain novelists, that one is reminded; and in this domain of social nuance Jane Austen is brought to mind. For Crabbe, like her, makes his points above all by dialogue. Of which *Delay Has Danger* may be pointed to: the thirteenth of the *Tales of the Hall* and one of Crabbe's most brilliant, and most novel-like, poems. It describes—most convincingly—how a young man gradually lets himself be manoeuvred, through mere lack of backbone, into a hopeless situation; separated from the superior young woman whom he loves, and who loves him, he finds himself first intrigued, then flatteringly adored, in the end irrevocably caught, by the silly but sweet young ward of the steward and steward's wife of the country mansion he is staying in. "Her fondness sooth'd him, for the man was vain,/And he perceived that he could give her pain": that terse dry couplet sums up the process of his fall. In the course of the story, the steward's wife tells him how she and her husband had called on "my lord, and Lady Jane" to tell them of the young man's wooing of the "trembling Fanny":

> *We saw my lord, and Lady Jane was there,*
> *And said to Johnson, 'Johnson, take a chair:'*
> *True, we are servants in a certain way,*
> *But in the higher places so are they;*
> *We are obey'd in ours, and they in theirs obey—*
> *So Johnson bow'd, for that was right and fit,*
> *And had no scruple with the earl to sit—*
> *Why look you so impatient while I tell*
> *What they debated?—you must like it well.*
> *'Let them go on,' our gracious earl began;*
> *'They will go off,' said, joking, my good man . . .*

The speaker's vulgarity, and the helpless squirming of the listener, are caught as firmly, wittily, and economically as Jane Austen catches the vulgarity of Mrs. Elton and the suppressed fury of Emma when the former tells her that "Knightley is quite the

[7] Preface to *Tales*.

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gentleman". A truly minute critic might argue that the point is established, in each case, by a single word: "joking" in Crabbe, "the" in Jane Austen.

Delay Has Danger will serve also to demonstrate another facet of Crabbe's genius, which, in a way—in a very different way—is in Jane Austen too. Like her novels, this poem is a social comedy; but like them, it is capable, when wanted, of going deeper, of releasing emotions which make "social comedy" seem an inadequate description. At the crisis of *Delay Has Danger*, when the young man's fate is finally sealed, there occurs a magnificent passage:

> *Early he rose, and look'd with many a sigh*
> *On the red light that fill'd the eastern sky;*
> *Oft had he stood before, alert and gay,*
> *To hail the glories of the new-born day;*
> *But now dejected, languid, listless, low,*
> *He saw the wind upon the water blow,*
> *And the cold stream curl'd onward as the gale*
> *From the pine-hill blew harshly down the dale;*
> *On the right side the youth a wood survey'd,*
> *With all its dark intensity of shade;*
> *Where the rough wind alone was heard to move,*
> *In this, the pause of nature and of love,*
> *When now the young are rear'd, and when the old*
> *Lost to the tie, grow negligent and cold—*
> *Far to the left he saw the huts of men,*
> *Half hid in mist, that hung upon the fen;*
> *Before him swallows, gathering for the sea,*
> *Took their short flights, and twitter'd on the lea;*
> *And near the bean-sheaf stood, the harvest done,*
> *And slowly blacken'd in the sickly sun;*
> *All these were sad in nature, or they took*
> *Sadness from him, the likeness of his look,*
> *And of his mind—he ponder'd for a while,*
> *Then met his Fanny with a borrow'd smile.*

That passage, in its different way, does the same—deepens the tone, sets going a resonance—as such things in Jane Austen as the talk between Anne Elliot and Captain Harville near the end of *Persuasion*, and her words which conclude it: "All the privilege I claim for my own sex (it is not a very enviable one: you need

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not covet it), is that of loving longest, when existence or when hope is gone."

Such writing is not the product of one who was no more than a shrewd, mild, humdrum old parson. When Crabbe's last volume, the *Tales of the Hall,* appeared in 1814, it was widely remarked that these stories dealt with love and love-entanglements far more often and more "warmly" (as the phrase went then) than his earlier works had done. And this, in fact, corresponded to something in his personal life: something which may recall the suppressed sensuality visible in *The World of Dreams.* Crabbe's wife, who had long been an invalid, suffering from melancholia, died in 1813, when Crabbe was fifty-nine; thereafter, throughout his late middle-age, miserably lonely, tormented by the imminence of old age and the desperation of one who feels that his emotional life is almost at an end, he sought for love in a way that caused some amusement and embarrassment, and no doubt some pity, in those whom it involved. He knew what was wrong with him, knew it with all the dry clarity of his intelligence—and to know it made it worse. "A Sensation of Loneliness," he writes of to one of the ladies whom he wooed, "that is increased when I walk through this populous Town and then I cannot avoid thinking there is not one being among these who either loves or hates, or has an Hope or a Fear that centres in, me. I repeat that I know my folly, but that does not take away the feeling."[8] He was aware that "people talked". "No! my dear Madam," he writes to the same correspondent, "I do not wonder that even my Affairs and my Follies should be known and . . . a subject of Conversation."[9] No doubt they were: they included some eminently discussable passages, some serio-comic imbroglios of Henry Jamesian complexity. There was, among them, the affair of the two Charlottes. Crabbe had had a sentimental correspondence (his affairs were largely epistolary) with "a Miss Charlotte W. in Cornwall". "She sent me a Tale for versification and that introduced many other subjects." He soon allowed himself to think that the girl was beginning to love him (he was then just sixty, she in her twenties), till he learned from her ("the Reply was brief and friendly") that she "had been

[8]Letter to Elizabeth Charters, 26 July 1815,

[9]To the same, 6 June 1815,

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engaged some two or three years before" to another—but younger —parson, who, "a Rectory falling" to his lot, was now going to marry her. All the time, Crabbe's sentimental epistles to Miss Charlotte W. had been read—"every Letter and every Verse"— by the inevitable confidante, Miss Charlotte R. The latter "became interested and engaged, and at length, you must give me credit strange as it is! she caught my disease". Whereupon the two Charlottes agreed between them that Crabbe's attachment could be easily shifted from one to the other, the engaged to the disengaged. "It was judged that this apparently strong affection which could not be said to have an object [i.e., Crabbe had never met the girl] might readily be transferred to the Friend." Crabbe had no objections. "The last lady engrossed very soon all the writing." Miss Charlotte R., it appeared, was quite prepared, indeed determined, to marry him; only powerful objections from her family prevented it—and also, perhaps one may guess, a certain shrinking at the critical moment in the elderly wooer himself. And all this—to complete the imbroglio—Crabbe tells to the young woman who was the Charlottes' successor as sentimental correspondent.

This kind of thing, then, is what lies behind that part of Crabbe which recalls Jane Austen: a knowledge of *les égarements du coeur* on the level of middle-class leisure and morality. It is flavoured by the peculiar tone of that age, in which Augustan good sense was being softened, but was still very far from dissolved, by the acids of sentiment. It "comes to nothing", in a sense; it is all tittle-tattle by post; the victim himself can look with ironic self-mockery at his own silliness: yet when one has caught the tone, has understood the disciplined discretion which keeps it all within the limits of the gentlemanly and the ladylike, one can see that a true and even desperate emotion can lie behind it. "He met his Fanny with a borrow'd smile": the terrible ironic concentration of that adjective, foretelling the lifetime of married misery ("th' eternal clicking of the galling chains") which deception and self-deception are to lead to, shows how well aware Crabbe was of the depths and dangers behind the flowery and elegant sentiment. It is not surprising, then, with such awareness, that Crabbe should have joined Jane Austen and Scott, as he did in *Ellen Orford,* in their attacks on the false sentiment which was the age's bane, and the bad novels which were its favourite vehicles.

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But Crabbe, of course, had a much wider range than Jane Austen, both of personal experience and of literary subject; he can show up, as F. R. Leavis remarks, "Jane Austen's spinsterly limitations". He transcends those limitations especially when his work leaves the genteel in society and the respectable in behaviour, and cultivates the low and the squalid; and then it is another novelist, it is Dickens, whom he sometimes brings to mind. Both men describe with the same methods the world of the slums; each works by a sequence of sharp details, heightened sometimes to the verge of caricature:

> *To every house belongs a space of ground,*
> *Of equal size, once fenced with paling round;*
> *That paling now by slothful waste destroy'd,*
> *Dead gorse and stumps of elder fill the void;*
> *Save in the centre-spot, whose walls of clay*
> *Hide sots and striplings at their drink or play:*
> *Within, a board, beneath a tiled retreat,*
> *Allures the bubble and maintains the cheat;*
> *Where heavy ale in spots like varnish shows,*
> *Where chalky tallies yet remain in rows;*
> *Black pipes and broken jugs the seats defile,*
> *The walls and windows, rhymes and reck'nings vile;*
> *Prints of the meanest kind disgrace the door,*
> *And cards, in curses torn, lie fragments on the floor.*

> The walls and ceilings of the room were perfectly black with age and dirt. There was a deal table before the fire: upon which were a candle, stuck in a ginger-beer bottle, two or three pewter pots, a loaf and butter, and a plate. In a frying-pan, which was on the fire, and which was secured to the mantelshelf by a string, some sausages were cooking; and standing over them, with a toasting-fork in his hand, was a very old shrivelled Jew, whose villanous-looking and repulsive face was obscured by a quantity of matted red hair. He was dressed in a greasy flannel gown, with his throat bare; and seemed to be dividing his attention between the frying-pan and a clothes-horse, over which a great number of silk handkerchiefs were hanging. Several rough beds made of old sacks, were huddled side by side upon the floor.[10]

The details may be seen with that supra-normal clarity which

[10]The passage of Crabbe is from Part I of *The Parish Register;* that of Dickens from the eighth chapter of *Oliver Twist.*

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can, as it were, run over the edge of realism and take one into nightmare; Crabbe's lines in the third part of *The Parish Register*, on the house deserted by the lady of the manor, recall Dickens' description of Miss Havisham's house in *Great Expectations:*

> *Forsaken stood the Hall:*
> *Worms ate the floors, the tap'stry fled the wall:*
> *No fire the kitchen's cheerless grate display'd,*
> *No cheerful light the long-closed sash convey'd;*
> *The crawling worm, that turns a summer-fly,*
> *Here spun his shroud and laid him up to die*
> *The winter-death:—upon the bed of state,*
> *The bat shrill-shrieking woo'd his flickering mate . . .*

> From that room, too, the daylight was completely excluded, and it had an airless smell that was oppressive. A fire had been lately kindled in the damp old-fashioned grate, and it was more disposed to go out than to burn up, and the reluctant smoke that hung in the room seemed colder than the clearer air—like our own marsh mist. Certain wintry branches of candles on the high chimney-piece faintly lighted the chamber; or it would be more expressive to say, faintly troubled its darkness. . . . An epergne or centre-piece of some kind was in the middle of this cloth; it was so heavily overhung with cobwebs that its form was quite undistinguishable; and, as I looked along the yellow expanse out of which I remember its seeming to grow, like a black fungus, I saw speckled-legged spiders with blotchy bodies running home to it, and running out from it . . .

These are valid comparisons—there is a real resemblance between the two men's imaginations and methods—but the points of resemblance should not mask the real difference between them. Crabbe's way of working is always that of a poet; he does not write versified prose. He is more concentrated; he does not allow himself, in these descriptions, the ponderous humour which in Dickens can take one's eye off the object. Dickens' novel in prose is an immensely diffuse form—it can always find space for whims and fancies and divagations—Crabbe's short story in verse is highly compact.

Crabbe's attitude to "low life" (moral and social) is, like Dickens', a complex blend of emotions: a morbid fascination strongly tinged with revulsion, a wilful cultivation of the shudder

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with a real fear behind it, a hearty enjoyment of the disrespectful imperfectly censored by morality, and a strong leaven of humanitarian feeling combined with a possibly unconscious conviction that society without its rapscallions and its picturesque dregs would be considerably duller. And in Crabbe as in Dickens, this blend issues in a profoundly ambivalent result, in a treatment which oscillates in manner between minutely detailed realism and grotesque exaggeration, and in mood between thorough enjoyment of the rogues, pity for their misery, and moral deunciations of their roguery. Of which the effect, in Dickens, is very clearly a total impression that varies according to the reader's prejudices: a left-wing reader sees him as social reformer, a right-wing or unpolitical reader as creator of comic fantasy. Both readings can be convincingly documented. And the same would be true of Crabbe if he were read and criticized as widely as Dickens.

It all began, in both men, with intense early experience of poverty, social degradation, and family misery: which their lives escaped from, which their work never forgot. Aldeburgh is to Crabbe as the boot-blacking factory to Dickens. Both men reached prosperity, respectability, and acceptance in the topmost levels of society; both remained fascinated by what they emerged from. Fascinated in both senses of the word: delighted and bewitched. (The woman in *The World of Dreams* becomes a witch; the dreaming Crabbe is *one of* the paupers he shrinks from.) One might make a kind of analysis in depth of the various levels of Crabbe's interest in the disreputable and low. On the simplest, least ominous, no doubt most conscious level, Crabbe presents himself (in *The Parish Register*) as the bookish respectable parson, a Chaucer-like character, keeping his eyes on the ground—"erect by nature, but to bend inclined"—who indulges—surely such a worthy man may be granted his little foibles!—a harmless taste for the outcasts and oddities of society—"nor turn'd from gipsies, vagabonds, and fools." Such a character may well have—should have, indeed—a humanitarian interest in the miseries of the poor, which will issue in such things as the workhouse in *The Village*—lineal ancestor of Dickens' workhouse in *Oliver Twist*. And it is equally appropriate that the parson should preach the poor an occasional sermon, to the effect that their own wickedness is the cause of their misery. "Whence all these woes?" he asks them, and supplies the answer himself:

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From want of virtuous will,
Of honest shame, of time-improving skill;
From want of care t' employ the vacant hour,
And want of ev'ry kind but want of power.[11]

So far, so simple. The blend of amusement, kindness, and blunt refusal to sentimentalise or find excuses, is one we can fit with ease into the Christian-Augustan framework: with particular ease, since this was exactly the blend of Dr. Johnson. But Crabbe has other things. In the sixteenth letter of *The Borough*, there occurs a brilliant description of an old-style squire, bibulous, amorous, a Pan-like figure, an aristocrat whose high birth does not radically divide him from his lowly neighbours, for bed and bottle unite them all:

Then lived the good 'Squire Asgill—what a change
Has death and fashion shown us at the Grange!
He bravely thought it best became his rank
That all his tenants and his tradesmen drank;
He was delighted from his favourite room
To see them 'cross the park go daily home,
Praising aloud the liquor and the host,
And striving who should venerate him most.
No pride had he, and there was difference small
Between the master's and the servants' hall;
And here or there the guests were welcome all . . .
He never planted nor inclosed—his trees
Grew like himself, untroubled and at ease;
Bounds of all kinds he hated, and had felt
Choked and imprison'd in a modern belt
Which some rare genius now has twined about
The good old house, to keep old neighbours out . . .
Some prudes, of rigid kind, forbore to call
On the kind females—favourites at the hall;
But better natures saw, with much delight,
The different orders of mankind unite;
'Twas schooling pride to see the footman wait,
Smile on his sister and receive her plate.

In those lines Crabbe is evoking, and enjoying, an older England

[11] *The Parish Register*, Part I.

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than his own, an England which, still surviving in the countryside, was doomed in the near future by the twin forces of industrialism and middle-class respectability. His description of Squire Asgill reminds one irresistibly of an earlier portrait of a country squire, Shaftesbury's of Henry Hastings in the seventeenth century; Crabbe's remark about the footman's sister, mistress of the squire and seated at his table, recalls Shaftesbury's:

> Indeed all his neighbour's grounds and royalties were free to him, who bestowed all his time in such sports, but what he borrowed to caress his neighbours' wives and daughters, there being not a woman in all his walks of the degree of a yeoman's wife or under, and under the age of forty, but it was extremely her fault if he were not intimately acquainted with her. This made him very popular, always speaking kindly to the husband, father, or brother, who was to boot very welcome to his house whenever he came.

Both make the point that the squire's goings-on increased, not lessened, the unity of the social group which he headed; but there is a difference. Shaftesbury makes the point quite unselfconsciously; Crabbe's tone is semi-ironic—it lets him claim, if need be, that he didn't really mean it—for Crabbe is aware of other notions in the air around him, notions which, with Evangelical primness or Radical indignation, condemn the sort of equality that the randy old squires have stood for. Crabbe himself takes his little precaution against the critics; he puts his portrait of Squire Asgill into the mouth of a drunken reprobate, an inhabitant of the almshouse: yet his own gusto in the old pagan is as apparent as his contempt for the Squire's virtuous successor, "a pale old hag . . . a thing made up of stinginess and pride". The Squire is *alive*, a figure of health and vigour; something in Crabbe deeper than common sense or morality responds to him. Pallid gentility, indeed, seems always to lose in the contest for Crabbe's sympathy, when it has to compete with lusty lowness; there is also the superbly funny passage in *The Widow's Tale* (seventh of the *Tales*) which describes the farmer's daughter, turned to genteel young miss by a respectable boarding-school, suffering agonies when she returns to her father's all too democratic table:

> *Used to spare meals, disposed in manner pure,*
> *Her father's kitchen she could ill endure;*
> *Where by the steaming beef he hungry sat,*

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And laid at once a pound upon his plate;
Hot from the field, her eager brother seized
An equal part, and hunger's rage appeased;
The air, surcharged with moisture, flagg'd around,
And the offended damsel sigh'd and frown'd;
The swelling fat in lumps conglomerate laid,
And fancy's sickness seized the loathing maid.
But when the men beside their station took,
The maidens with them, and with them the cook;
When one huge wooden bowl before them stood,
Fill'd with huge balls of farinaceous food;
With bacon, mass saline, where never lean
Beneath the brown and bristly rind was seen;
When from a single horn the party drew
Their copious draughts of heavy ale and new;
When the coarse cloth she saw, with many a stain,
Soil'd by rude hinds who cut and came again—
She could not breathe; but, with a heavy sigh,
Rein'd the fair neck, and shut th' offended eye;
She minced the sanguine flesh in frustums fine,
And wonder'd much to see the creatures dine . . .

Easy enough—one may say—to enjoy the disreputable and the low in the attractive setting of the old countryside life: not so easy when urban slums are their habitat. But even there, Crabbe can feel the vigour behind the sordid misery:

Say, wilt thou more of scenes so sordid know?
Then will I lead thee down the dusty row;
By the warm alley and the long close lane,—
There mark the fractured door and paper'd pane,
Where flags the noon-tide air, and, as we pass,
We fear to breathe the putrefying mass:
But fearless yonder matron; she disdains
To sigh for zephyrs from ambrosial plains;
But mends her meshes torn, and pours her lay
All in the stifling fervour of the day.
Her naked children round the alley run,
And roll'd in dust, are bronzed beneath the sun;
Or gambol round the dame, who, loosely dress'd,
Woos the coy breeze, to fan the open breast . . .

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There hungry dogs from hungry children steal,
There pigs and chickens quarrel for a meal;
There dropsied infants wail without redress
And all is want and wo and wretchedness:
Yet should these boys, with bodies bronzed and bare,
High-swoln and hard, outlive that lack of care . . .[12]

There is almost a note of envy there; the tough tanned children and the matron, sluttish but vigorous and fertile, seem as the Squire seemed against his meagre successor, figures of greater vitality than the imagined visitor to the slums. The visitor "fears" —but the matron is "fearless".

Against such delight must be set the horror. (The Dickensian equivalent might be the delight with which the Artful Dodger is created, contrasted with the horror felt for Fagin and Sikes.) Twice at least Crabbe hints at something—incest—at which the delicacy of his age would have made it quite impossible to do more than hint: first, in the description of the slums in *The Parish Register:*

Yet, ere they go, a greater evil comes—
See! crowded beds in these contiguous rooms;
Beds but ill parted, by a paltry screen
Of paper'd lath or curtain dropp'd between;
Daughters and sons to yon compartments creep,
And parents here beside their children sleep:
Ye who have power, these thoughtless people part,
Nor let the ear be first to taint the heart.

And again in *Ellen Orford:*

My idiot-girl, so simply gay before,
Now wept in pain; some wretch had found a time,
Depraved and wicked, for that coward-crime;
I had indeed my doubts, but I suppress'd
The thought that day and night disturb'd my rest;
She and that sick-pale brother—but why strive
To keep the terrors of that time alive?

[12]The first passage is from *The Borough,* letter XIX; the second from *The Parish Register,* Part I.

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Such hints were far more remarkable than they may appear to us; for the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was the most prudish age of English literature. Evangelical piety, horror at the dreadful doings of the French, whose political aberrations were connected (by Coleridge, for example) with their amorous naughtiness,[13] and above all, perhaps, the dominating presence of the Bluestockings, a female intelligentsia impenetrably virtuous and superlatively delicate: all these combined to exclude from the mentionable a great deal that, one suspects, Crabbe could and would have liked to mention. "She and that sick-pale brother"—there is a real pressure of horror behind that phrase; an emotion is there which stretches almost to the limit both the Augustan form and the age's propriety.

It was with Crabbe, then, as with Johnson. There is a fitting symbolism in the fact that when Johnson, in the year before his death, read *The Village*, the older Augustan should have seen and approved the first assured achievement of the younger. Both men held steady, in the stern bonds of a discipline both religious and artistic, a wealth of passionate and varied experience, which only the deafness of ears ill-trained to catch the variety behind the uniform Augustan surface, prevents us from sensing. Both men had known life from poverty to luxury. Both were in essence against the current of their times, seeing around them—and to some degree suffering within them—the disintegrating of the civilisation they stood for. And this in both gave the tension to their work. In Crabbe the tension is more open—since he lived later, when the process of disintegration was farther advanced—and also happier, since his lighter and more elastic mind could come to terms with forces that Johnson could only repudiate; the things that Crabbe could express in his published work Johnson had to keep for his notebooks, his private prayers, and those brief moments in his talk ("Sent to Hell, sir, and punished everlastingly!") which come like blasts from a fire beneath the earth.

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13 *. . . Still promising*
Freedom, themselves too sensual to be free . . . (Fears in Solitude)

O France, that mockest Heaven, adulterous, blind . . .
The Sensual and the Dark rebel in vain,
Slaves by their own compulsion! (Ode to France)

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WINTHROP PALMER

Ceremonies

I

Numbers withdraw in a late season;
The trees undress for uncomplaining sleep
December guns rape the water-bird
And ladies of the Country Club shriek.

Then a New Year delegate ascends the stair
To marble and tobacco ceremonies
Where stone and smoke deliver the hero
Who bleeds or burns for such as these.

II

Park Avenue doors in white paint
Reply from six to eight, "come in," "come in."
The cocktail crows: "Who would be king keeps court,"
The ladies of the house are long and thin.

Chairs settle in the narrow room;
The guests stand up. "Please give me your attention."
"A dry martini." "When I stayed with Jung
He laughed at Oxford's liberal pretension."

The last game before going to bed,
The dinner party, duly enquires for the war,
Makes love with compliments, resolves to serve the state
And sends Ophelia to a seminar.

III

Resort to monstrous nature orders this scene:
A suppliant bather, a pilgrim with swinging staff
Flatten out for the wind and the positive sun;
A royal palm and the unbroken ocean
Survive together, silhouette and space.

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The grey, the graceful feathers dust the sky
While frolic roads unroll too many miles
And castles tip their lanterns to the lake.
Where sleeping beauty lies forgotten here
Only the heron or the pelican know.

Freedom

When articles of faith become geometry
The age of iron advances step by step;
Trees fall back one after another
And armies of stone re-order the landscape.

Only the fresh winds that finger the sky
Or the tide withdrawing its reluctant ocean
Are free. Until lovers choose to die
Happily for some impractical, silly notion.

The Victors

The sky bleeds to death under a hill
Black as the velvet flank of your sacred bull,
Minos, while the young men of Crete trample their grapes.

In the yawning earth your Ithaca's gone, Ulysses,
The warriors of Attica and the men of Thebes
Now sing for Calypso in a harsher tongue.

Agamemnon, the watchman has quit your palace roof,
Your windows lick the flames of burning Troy
And your joyful queen puts her lover into your bed.

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EVELYN SHEFNER

Monday Morning

"So YOU'VE DECIDED to go through with it."

Ponderous, poised for no answer, he detached a hot, sticky cinnamon bun from the glazed square on the serving dish before him and buttered top, bottom, and all four sides. A raisin fell to his plate as he suavely bit off half in one mouthful.

In the courtyard below a woman, blue jeans protruding under a camel's-hair coat, came out carrying a greasy paper bag and an armful of Sunday *Times*. Straightening, she raised her pin-curled head to the darkened sky, infringed upon by pale brick battlements, crisscrossed by clotheslines. Ragged leaflets of snow made a white splash in the upper air before coming to an abrupt end on the concrete base. Some hit against the windows before sputtering out. The early morning kitchen, scarcely roused from the night, held all the murkiness and murderous intentions of sleep.

"Well, I can tell you right now," he went on, "you're out of your mind."

Across from him, the woman raised her chin from the palm of her hand and stared at him in silence. Her hair also was tortured and bound into a sculpturesque early-morning helmet. The face beneath was blanched and naked, the skin white and heavy-pored, with lines of tension running from the nose to the corners of her pallid, wilfully sensual mouth.

"That remark doesn't surprise me," she said at last, looking at him with a contemptuous knowledge. "I've been expecting it."

"You're not surprised by anything," the man stated, reaching out for another hot bun. "Neither surprised, nor amazed, nor moved, nor aware. . . ."

"I don't have to listen to any more of your insults," she reminded him. "That's why I'm doing what I am."

This time it was his turn to stare, taking in the heavy red robe inside which her body seemed to be radiating an aura of smugness, of hateful, contemptible complacency. The sleeve drew back as she reached for the coffeepot, exposing her warm white arm, neatly muscled for a woman's. Sometimes when he threw

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himself on her these crude little swellings, like a young boy's, seemed to reproach him, with their testimony of hours spent in the athletic round of housework, for his own inert way of life. His arms, like the rest of his heavy, lugubrious body, were flabby; his most muscularly taxing activity was walking to and from the writing classes he taught at Columbia, five blocks away.

Inside this bearish covering, however, back deep in the caves of his nature crouched a spirit of wily dexterity—the soul of the hunter. This self was at present in command. It regarded his wife with the pitiless, stalking attention of the marksman for some delicately plumaged object.

"I don't think even you believe that," he told her, mustering a heavy pedantic aloofness: it was his most reliable weapon: he could call it up at will.

"This time, try to face up to your caprices for what they're worth. For your own good, I advise you. You've decided to dump your responsibilities and take yourself off to Mexico. Life is too narrow for you here, you want to enlarge your horizons. Very well. But don't persuade yourself that you're running away from my scathing tongue. You can give as good as you can take. Any day."

He plucked the fallen raisin from his plate, and popped it into his mouth.

"—You're right," she said eagerly, "I *ought* to enlarge my horizons. What have I to look forward to here but work and more work and tiptoeing around the house all morning, and not being able to talk to my friends on the telephone because the king is in his counting-house and mustn't be disturbed—. We're paying the telephone company plenty, for their service. I have a right to use up my calls."

"You're on the telephone all afternoon, anyway."

This was an old argument, stale, bitter. "How many hours a day must you waste in gossip? What can you have to say to those stupid bitches that's so important it can't be put off a few hours? You might show just a little consideration for your husband, if only for his work, by giving up your calls for those few hours in the morning. . . ."

"I don't *make* calls in the morning," she informed him, coldly, "I receive them. What am I supposed to tell my stupid friends,

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that I'm married to a tyrant who won't let me talk on the telephone? What kind of respect do you think they would have for me then? I have my social position to keep up, too. Half the time you're not writing in there, anyway. You're reading, or staring into space, or taking naps. I know."

Tapped, he lost control for the moment. "It's none of your business how I spend my time!" he shouted. "So long as I'm supporting you and the children, you have no right to comment. Who's paying the rent? Who's paying for those telephone calls? What have you ever been but a millstone, an old man of the sea?"

"I know, and the children, they're burdens on you, too. Maybe you should have drowned them when they were born, like puppies. Maybe you could find some way to get rid of us all, even yet. You're clever enough."

She got up, walked to the sink, and began to wash the dishes left over from the night before. Running hot water over them to loosen the grease, she leaned against the sink in an attitude of bleak servitude. She was a small woman, with a flexible figure that had a maddening capacity to fall into postures of dejection. He knew, from experience, that for the rest of the day she would drag herself about the house like a slave girl up for auction in the bazaars of Alexandria. You could almost hear the brass clinking on her ankles as she cleared the breakfast table and stored the milk and butter in the refrigerator. The manifold woes of sorrowing womankind were forever at her disposal; and in the gesture of emptying an ashtray she could conjure up images of loss, exploitation, grief, the pangs of childbed, the cudgel at her back.

Over the sound of running water, the lamenting voice droned on: "If I have no right to criticize how you spend your time in your study, then you have no right to criticize me for gossiping. It's not a crime to be interested in other people, even though you try to make me feel it is. I know how you've always looked down on me. Your friends, too, they have no respect for me because I'm not an artist. I don't create anything, I merely bring children into the world. All right, so I'm not an intellectual, I'm a moron. But you want to take away from me the only outlet I have!"

She was not crying yet but she would be, soon.

"My God!" he banged his fist on the table, thunderously. "Can't you even *admit* that your telephone calls are of secondary

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importance? You say people look down on you for not being an artist. But you're the one who seems to get an indecent satisfaction out of depriving a working artist of the few hours a day he has free, at his disposal. Isn't it enough for you that I have to spend every afternoon teaching and most of my evenings writing reviews? Do you want me to give up everything? Haven't I sacrificed enough, already?"

It was her great opportunity: he had left the door wide open: and he could beat out the rhythm of the syllables. . . . *Then why aren't you in your study working, now?* Instead, she wiped her hands on a towel and sat down again at the breakfast table, facing him.

"I should have married a man who went off to the office every day," she said dully.

The aptness, and the wastes of passive acquiescence lying back of her remark almost frightened him. It was not much, but it was the nearest either had come to defining a truth about themselves. She sat facing him, a figure of night-deep gloom, but beneath the play-acting he was aware of a new emphasis in the forward bent of her shoulder and the pointed tapping of her small, adept fingers on the table. Apparently, she was pondering something out.

To his surprise, he was embarrassed by another faint tug of fear. "I never deceived you," he said huffily, "about the way I intended to earn my living."

Just then the telephone rang.

With a crafty look on her face, avoiding his eyes altogether, she sprang up, trailing the red coat behind her, and ran out into the hall. He heard her voice, muted, tactful, answering. Then she took the telephone by its long cord and walked with it into his study, slamming the door.

They had quarreled all weekend. The fighting had broken out on Saturday afternoon over some picayunish incident—as most major wars, the cauldron long simmering, are touched off by mere trifles . . . a complaint repeated once too often ("Why don't you put away your filthy socks, do I have to spend my lifetime picking up after you?") or some remark he dropped that had bruised her feelings, ordinarily remote as an ox's.

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With care and cultivation, the argument had bloomed into a ripe, stunning growth. Saturday night she had moved into the children's room. Sunday afternoon, when the children went down to the Aronsons' to watch television, the fighting had broken out again into the open. Sunday night they slept once more in the same bed, but held rigidly apart. Several times it seemed she was about to fall off the bed, she clutched her end of the mattress so impulsively. She couldn't have slept at all; he had not. Now it was Monday morning: the children, Kenny and Barbara, had been hustled off to school, and hostilities had broken out all over again.

And he was convinced, this time, that she had picked a fight with him intentionally, in order to warm her courage to the point where she would have the nerve to tell him she wanted to go off to Mexico for the next five weeks with her friend Elsie!

Through the door of his study he could hear her voice rising in a note of self-righteous complaint. It must be Elsie she was talking to. She was probably describing his latest assault on her sensibilities. He picked up the crumbs from the serving platter and applied them with a sticky finger, one by one, to his mouth.

He, himself, had never been to Mexico, despising those tourists who descended on the pyramids with color-film cameras strapped around their necks, seizing on celluloid parts of a dead world whose noble vitality would never see rebirth in their own sterile lives. Even more despicable were the hordes of expectant divorcees, women like Elsie, all beak and talon, jingling with money hung on them like wampum by some unfortunate man; or series of men. . . .

Still, Mexico might not be too bad for a person like himself, if he could arrange to live there alone on his own terms, for a few months perhaps in an Indian village, working steadily, remote from interference. Swallowing the last of the crumbs, he cultivated the sense of it, for a moment: the dense pure domed blue, the simmering white adobe, a flat or a mountainous land, and tensions resolved into a tropical letting-go; in the background somewhere a warm, limber, adoring girl, like Gauguin's little Tahitian friend. . . . For an artist, he had traveled far less than he ought to. His early marriage, which in some ways had been stabilizing, had deprived him of mobility.

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Standing there in an attitude of attention, head cocked to one side, he considered going out into the hall to hear better (there was always something he might be needing from his study), but on second thought he decided against it. For all his curiosity, it would be undignified to be caught in the act.

—Of course it had been crazy for him to say, "I forbid you to leave!" Even he could see its absurdity, coming from a man who abhorred violence and compulsion, whose life and work were dedicated to the task of the self freeing itself from rigid external barriers. If the intent of his work could be summed up in one word, that word would be "freedom". But someone had to protect her, and himself, and yes, the children too, from the consequences of these weird escapisms that settled over her from time to time.

It couldn't be done, he had reminded her, calming down and speaking rationally: where would they get the money for the trip, who would take care of the children? Well, she'd had an answer for that, too. Elsie had *invited* her to be her guest, in exchange for the company and moral support. As for the children, if he wasn't willing to take them over for a few short weeks, they could stay with her sister in New Jersey, it wouldn't exactly kill them.

"—With *that* woman?" he had asked, and set off a new round of insult and recrimination.

Behind the door there was only a rush of short, excitable cries, then silence. Straightening from his listener's stoop, he glanced up at the electric clock on the wall. 11:15. Two hours of this morning in the lap of the gods already, in addition to the time lost from his work this whole wretched weekend. Soon he would have to shave, and get ready to leave for his classes. And she was camped in his study, and would not come out. He looked down at his hands, pushed back the halfmoons on the nails with the fingernails of the opposite hand, and blew at the golden hairs on the joints; an old trick. His hands were tapering and delicate, inappropriate for so big a man. They gave the lie to his bulk, as being not native to him but achieved by some effort, and also affirmed it. Turning his massive head, he looked out the window. The snow in the courtyard had grown denser, a skein of dirty gray floating down on an insubstantial gray netherworld.

At last she came out of his study, wearing a peculiar smirk of

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fear and triumph that made him want to strike her down. Her bearing was jaunty in the red robe, like a drunken sparrow's, but her eyes said, "Beat me, if you dare."

"We're leaving Thursday," she told him.

Instantly a heavy feeling was shaken loose in him, like a stone pushed away from the mouth of a cavern and sent thundering down a mountainside. After it rushed something prehuman, blind in the open air, accustomed to seeing only by the light of smoky torches in a partial blackness.

"I said, I forbid you!" he shouted.

"I don't care, I'm going anyway!"

"Then you needn't come back! I don't want to see you again. If you go now, you can say goodbye for good!"

"That's what I've been waiting to hear you say," she cried. "I know you've been wanting to get rid of us for a long time. You've never cared for me, or the children either." She was sobbing. "You've always wanted to send us away."

"You forget," he reminded her icily, "it's *you* who's leaving."

"You needn't make excuses. I know. I know how you've always felt about us. I know how you carried on while I was in the hospital with Barbara. It doesn't matter now." She wiped her eyes. "I'm *glad* you ordered me not to come back. Elsie offered to lend me the lawyer's fees if you went on being so vicious. Anyone can get a divorce down in Mexico. And I even have enough grounds to get one here."

"That's fine," he told her, "and your friend Elsie, will she support you for the rest of your life? Great. Congratulations. I give you to her, with thanks!"

"Don't forget you still have a legal duty towards us," she reminded him, blowing her nose.

"Not if you abandon me, I don't. If it comes to that, I'll get a housekeeper and make out with the children on my own. We can get along without you. Stay in Mexico, there must be a profession you can practice down there. If you can't think of one, I'll make a suggestion."

"I'll *die* before I let you keep the children!" she screeched, and ran out of the room. He heard her in their bedroom, at the other end of the apartment, banging drawers open and shut, apparently at random. Then it was quiet.

He remained in the kitchen, which was slowly darkening, the

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snow pelting against the windows in heavy gusts and handfuls, isolating them, a muffling gray wall. When he was a little boy his grandmother had entertained him with stories of travelers lost on the Russian steppes, the faithful horses steamy and exhausted breathing white huffs into the frosted air, the furred men sitting in the lonely troika while the circle of starry-eyed wolves ranged in.

Perhaps, this time, he had gone too far. Well, she had driven him to it. Actually, he had gone farther in the past, she had too, and nothing had come of it. With a grunt, he bent to pick up a shiny new schoolboy's ruler left propped against the refrigerator —Kenny's latest prize, only this morning fiercely contended with Barbara—and spanned it lightly between his fingers, as if it were an instrument of moral judgment. He was the more responsible party: so the burden of the answer lay on him.

Why had he married her?

This was a question he sometimes thrust at himself and his wife, beating on his chest impressively at the height of their quarrels. Behind the rhetoric lay whole ranges of answers he had preferred, all these years, not to speculate on. It might be enough to say that like any other very young man he had married his wife because she was beautiful; or because he thought she was beautiful.

When he met her, twelve years before, his wife had been gifted with unusual lightness and grace, a pure bodily outline of beauty that had excited him immeasurably. In a weak moment, he once told her she reminded him of an Eastern dancing girl; suggesting a beautiful mutability, the creature going through its changes, unfixed by custom or definition . . . foam on the wave, Aphrodite rising from that foam, a girl on an amphora lifting her arms from the folds of her tunic. His own figure, middle-aged now, had never been so much different. The grace and flexibility of his wife had appealed to him as a contrast to his own burgher solemnity. Also, he thought privately, living with her, he might be able to incorporate some of these graceful qualities into his writing: so that one might have said he had fallen in love with an idea.

But why had they *actually* chosen one another?

With the ruler he tapped lightly on the window. There was

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no sound of sobbing coming from the bedroom. What could be going on in there? Had she gone out? Was she writing him a long farewell letter? Had she committed suicide by some unusually silent and discreet method? He smiled. That was unlikely. Probably she had fallen asleep. It had been a tough weekend, for them both; maybe he could get in a nap, too, before going off to school. The morning was ruined as far as anything else was concerned.

Still he sat on in the kitchen, knocking the ruler softly against the window, trying to draw someone's attention, perhaps, to his part of the house. There were plenty of arguments on her side: he was generous enough to admit that. No doubt their social life was a great bore. Most of his friends were professional acquaintances, teachers at Columbia or other writers drawn into a small, self-protective community. He himself disapproved of its cliquishness, its provinciality. It was not true, as his wife claimed, that these people despised her, but they were undeniably less interested in her than in the "nonproductive" wives of his other colleagues, sensing, perhaps, some begrudging and belittling in her attitude.

Most of the gatherings and parties they went to were those given by his friends, where she often spent whole evenings sitting on a couch with one of the other wives, noisily discussing babies or recipes in a broad, wicked attempt at self-parody. But he stepped forward boldly, drinking the heady wine of approval. When women ogled him, he ogled back. If they seemed willing and were not absolute pigs, he made arrangements, discreetly in the hallway helping one on with her coat or in a bedroom into which he had followed her, to meet outside; and eventually, if he could, he slept with her.

He could never convince his wife that these excursions were in no sense an attack upon herself, or indeed took away anything that was rightfully hers. Not one of these affairs had lasted more than a few months. Few of the women had engaged him, even on the level of affection, to a point where his attention was seriously diverted from her or from the children. None of them had made him contemplate breaking up his home. It was not worth it. He could always start up another affair.

And except for her jealousy and competitiveness, how did it hurt her? He *had* been discreet: there was very little she could

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be certain of. He didn't believe for one minute that she had evidence enough for a divorce. It was unfortunate, of course, that she had learned about that business when she was in the hospital with Barbara, so quickly . . . on the third day after she came home. But what could he do? The girl was a pathological talebearer. When he learned she had gone, repentant and weeping, to his wife, he had given her a stiff talking-to and had dropped her, the bitch.

And really, he told himself, scratching his head, he might go into his study now. If he skipped lunch there was more than an hour he could use there before making a last-ditch effort to leave. He never arrived at his first class with more than two minute's grace anyway, on some days the beginning hour found him panting up the stairs, briefcase bumping against his thighs, black rage pounding out his chest against the obstacles—his wife, the children (who were alternately in a whiney or a rackety phase), the laziness and obtuseness of his GI Bill students, sitting back waiting to be amused by his mock-heroic tantrums as he stamped in like the wrath of Achilles. . . .

The obstacles that came between him and self, between himself and his work. Should he turn his head in a moment of fatigue they stacked up skyward, there was no ending. His very existence depended on laying them low.

Slumped wretchedly into a chair by the kitchen table, he sunk his head on his crossed arms; the only sound the whirring of the electric clock above his head.

How? How? In God's name, how? He pummeled the table with both fists. How demolish the piled-up mistakes of a lifetime, any more than he could sit behind the wheel of a bulldozer and lay waste the ugly ramparts of the city, brick, steel, neon, linoleum, all crushed into a powdery silt, his cigarette's ash? . . . And after the ground had been cleared, could he then, by patience and a loving persistence, laying down the act of creation by so many small grains of love, build his ideal city? The kingdom of God, he reminded himself wearily, is always within us.

In that case, of course, he should get up and walk into the next room this very minute, and with the time at hand—in his one hour—work away at his small piece of celestial real-estate,

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modestly designed to outlast eternity. At this thought he sat up, quickly. Who could tell? His next book, if he ever finished it, might even free him from classrooms and reviewing, altogether.

But simultaneously the thought came to him that he ought to go in and try to make it up with his wife. After all, he asked himself, baring his yellow square teeth in a grimace, where would he be without her? And for that matter, where would he be? After their twelve years together, she held some key to his nature: their substances had intermingled, part-and-part. She was the nurturing membrane off which his talents had fed, all these years! More. On the simple human, the day-to-day, he needed her, she needed him. Although she might belittle him, she was proud of having so strong a man. And he—in a rising spiral of loving awareness that took in minutely and embraced the low-ceilinged kitchen, the spotty oilcloth on the table, the pell-mell arrangement of pots, pans, cereal boxes, spice tins that festered the top of the refrigerator; the snow, plunging wildly, that hissed past in large flakes and spattered his window-view—he felt his bowels reaching out for this wife of his whose evidence was everywhere about him.

Perhaps this was what he had needed all along, he told himself in a state of hushed, unbelieving excitement. *Both* of them. Both the vision of light and its negation. The radiant dancing girl and the pale, reproachful drab she had transformed herself into, in the course of their life together. Between them, those two, they defined a reality, held a world trembling in balance.

They would go on, he felt positive of this now with a strong flow of affirmation, and not only because he could hardly afford, yet, to maintain two households (naturally, he had never expected to give up the children!) but for better, more interior reasons. They had each laid a finger on the other's secret places: they knew one another where it counted. Ah, they were truly married! For a bad cat, he recited to himself, smiling, drumming his fingers on the table, a bad rat.

She came out of the bedroom dressed for the street, but she had neglected to take down her hair. In the white, mask-like face the petulant and lascivious mouth stood out in high relief,

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engorged by emotion. Her hair was still tightly fixed to the scalp in a bristling artery of pins and whorls that contrasted oddly with the small hat tipped back on her head.

Standing in the kitchen doorway, staring not at but into him, she uncomfortably suggested an enraged goddess of some minor cult: her hair might have been bristling snakes. There was a genuine wildness about her. Her nostrils were twitching, as though she were literally breathing fire. He must restrain her, he thought in some alarm. She was a woman transfigured.

But his wife's wildness also made his own nostrils enlarge. An animal rankness of emotion hung in the air, hugely disquieting. And as they faced one another without saying a word, between them only the crazy blank burr of the electric clock, he softly offered a hand, tentative, exploratory, to the rigid curls of her hair.

"Don't touch me!" she yelped in genuine outrage. "I hate you! You're cheap! You're common! Your friends may think you're a great man, but I know what you are! Cheap! You lie to me! I know about your other women! Liar! Cheat!"

Greatly disturbed for her sake, he felt at the same time the stirrings of a giant excitement. All the battling of the last three days, plus the touch-me-not formality of their last night in bed had left him immoderately receptive.

"Calm down." He tried to reassure her. "You're upset, you don't know what you're saying. No one is trying to hurt you. You wouldn't want the neighbors to hear, would you?"

With his heavy knees he began to nudge her in the direction of the nearest room, his studio, and toward the cot on which he took his naps.

Neither resisting nor complying she bent back under the pressure of his legs as if they were performing together a clumsy, bearish dance. Slowly, inchwise, they traveled in this manner from the kitchen into the hall and from the hall turned left, into the studio. Within the coiled springs of his own excitement, which had caused sweat to break out on his forehead and soak the fur of his armpits, he could tell that she was being moved in the dance by the same inarguable need as he. Her body was arched back, her breasts were tossed and pointed up to him like two

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flaring serpents. But she continued to scream out her insults like a raucous tropical bird the while he, powerful, unspeaking, nudged her through the doorway and toward the bed.

When they had worked their way through the open door of the room he took a quick look at his watch; a half hour before the children arrived home for lunch.

Her deprecations were now matched by his. "Bitch," he muttered under his breath as he bore down. "Filthy whore."

Just as they reached the bed she started, thrust out an arm and dragged herself clear. She stood looking around in bewilderment, eyes widening as she took in for the first time where she was, by what means she had arrived there. Turning, she began to push and work him aside, this time in an honest, darting, housewifely rage.

"Let me go!" she screamed as she twisted against him. "The nerve! Let me go this minute!"

It seemed that she was indeed angry enough to resist.

Her husband, sweaty and heaving, grappled with her, muttering assurances while pushing hard, with one hand, at her shoulder. As they stood there, ridiculously tugging at one another in a nearly equal show of strength, all at once her muscles unlocked and an indecent smile of complicity melted her face. He did not push her onto the bed, she toppled. Lying there, white, flaccid, her limbs sprawled and unhinged, she welcomed him with the smile of a corpse seducing its murderer.

But before plunging in, he had the presence of mind to mutter, "You won't go then? You'll stay."

After, there was only the ragged sound of breathing.

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MILTON KLONSKY

The Old Magi at the Burlesque

Pulsing from phase to phase, far-off, a bright
American star that sheds itself in flares
Of jazz, she hides behind the light she bares
Revealed and veiled by spangles, white in white,
As if her solid flesh were made of light,
Light of their eyes, the flesh of dreams and prayers,
Substance of nothingness, O wheel of stares,
Ishtar, Mama, first wish come true tonight!

So she, at last, unspangles all but one
Unknown triangular zone of swaddling bands.
Hearing their cries, the endless jazz begun
Again she comes and hides, with her bare hands
Upon the patch, death like a dazzling sun
And the invisible for which it stands.

The Descent of the Muse

EVERY TIME I TURN ON THE LIGHT, every time I try to say what I mean, the words scatter like cockroaches. Away from me in a radiating panic of angular jerks and sprints, feints, dead-stops, sudden swerves and sidelong plunges under the sink, up the wall, down the drain, they all go into the dark. And there they hide inside themselves, swaddled in other words, in darkness, if you know what I mean.

Since that's the way it is, I shut my eyes. I pull down all the blinds, making the darkness without equal to the darkness within, an absent space neither here nor there where nothing goes but echoes, mirages, memories, after-images and dead stars, ghosts of departed qualities. . . . And then I brood, thinking of nothing,

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watching and waiting, as though I were part of the kitchen itself or something far more deeply interfused. Suddenly, just as I thought, one bolts out of nowhere like a forgotten phone number, perfect in all its joints; another, another, and still another, until the room is full of them, waving their filaments and peering about with a wild surmise.

I know them all as well as my own name:
There's *Moon,* there's *Spasm,* and there's *Fire*
With brilliant *Flame* (my favorite);
And there, with his snout in the air,
That dirty little *Shit* who lords it everywhere;
There's *Love,* behind the sink;
There's *Truth,* who takes to drink;
There's *Beauty,* teetering on the brink;
And there's that pompous *I* who thinks he's *Me*
Or *You* or *Who-Knows-Who-Knows-Who-Is-Who?*
And there, way up, way up the wailing wall—
O *Life* O *Death* O *Time*
Whose petty pace doth climb and climb—
That sad, old, bad, bold *Nobodaddy* of them all.

What a sight that was! Multitudes were walking and skittering on the floor with little graph-like movements up and down, a pedestrian mob of the sort you can find anywhere; but, here and there, as if in a trance, a few stood alone and introverted with their antennae lifted in attitudes of prayer; others were rolled over on their backs, thrashing and kicking up their legs in playful copulation; some were mounting one another in a ring, a sort of circus posy of tiny acrobatic hippopotami or segmented sillabubs with shiny armored dewlaps; others were creeping along, precious and aloof, even a little bored, with long delicate trembling wands and Hamlet-like refinements of indecision; and some were there of a dark and foreign aspect, intruders from a distant apt. or evil neighborhood, maybe Arabian berbers or Delphic gibberers—
They mince apart upon tip-toe
Eeny, Meany, Miny & Moe
Mene, Mene, Tekel Upharsin:
O MANY ARE TAKEN IN THEIR SIN.

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And I, still I stood there, a blind lighthouse watching and waiting. The irregular heart of the refrigerator began to beat and shake. Then, from the depths of the sink, came a long, lonely, agonized squawk like the horn of some ghost ship lost in the coils, a sound that steadily rose eeking and eeking from a wild Wallala leialala to a far gray wailing Eli Eli and a high aiyaiyai too pure and thin to be heard. The time was near at hand.

Through the open window, a breeze came in and blew the curtains back into the room, spreading and fluttering like the wings of a great lunar moth, an aerial image that danced in my eyes, blurred, dipped and wavered in the darkness slowly toward the lamp, hung there for a split second, passed under the shade, and slipped, just as I thought, inside the bulb at last. The room lit up! Everything was made clear in one magnesium burst of revelation!

And there they go! Away from me in a radiant panic!

HENRY RAGO

Morning above Port-au-Prince

The sun spreads like a drum-beat in the East
As Ti-Pau swings his wagon into the yard
And scatters the wretched hens in a storm of feathers,
The horse's head and the banana leaves
Shaking like doom over the foolish beasts.

He has no shoes, this Ti-Pau, and no father,
But a handsome day's afloat, and not the least
Abject or brash he sings to his tall God.
"Bon jour," he sings over the small stampede,
"Bon jour" to the noble sky, "Bon jour, Ministre."

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The Poem for Naples

The poem for Naples
Never got started
Or it lingered in Naples
Just where it started.

No "problem", no "tension":
Chiefly its trouble
Was its lack of intention
To have any trouble.

It managed twelve lines
Not stirring itself
As long as each line
Could rhyme with itself.

But even this budging
One side to the other
Required some nudging.
It just wouldn't bother.

The poem for Napoli
Eluded precision
And now lingers happily
Afloat in a vision

Of the pure verities
And the unspoken beauty
With balloons of goat-cheese
And harps of prosciutti.

On a Map Kept as a Souvenir

The ship swallowed by time; unfriendly edges
Held by a sea-horse; nothing to adorn
The vacancy but red lines of the course
Sagging from port to port. Festoons of wishes!

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MARGARET PETERSON

Noel

Place St. Sulpice, Paris, 1950

Dissonant bells intone the early mass,
As with stiff, awkward movements of the cold,
Muffled in desolation, figures pass.

Through shadowed mist the wan processional,
Seeming as old as prophecy, returns—
Suborned once more to faith by ritual.

Yet surety beyond their own devising
Is given those whose simpleness is schooled
In vague simplicities, who, unsurmising,

Will ask no more of time than time bestows.
Far off the morning carriers cry of war.
The crude encumbrances of earth impose

Their old catastrophes. But here the street
Lies quiet. Over its stones the wet leaves hush
Amid decay the sound of passing feet.

ROLF FJELDE

The Mystery

In the courtyards of the moon
Trees of shuddering whiteness weep
Their leaves, to float on silver pools or creep,
Wind-whispered, over footworn stone
Among the vines to shadows and the deep
Mossed walls of starlit patios.

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There a gaping dragon's mouth
Pours its transfigured liquid cry
Into a basin shallow-scooped and prey
To water plants, laced isles of growth
Small-surfed by foam. There it was I
Saw her once, how she appeared

Nocturnal to my gaze, a someone
Strange gliding along the colonnade,
White in starlight, dim in shade,
A winking form that came upon
The favored tiles to the basin side
To lean by its lip of fern. . .

And so sat: half slumberous yet tall,
Hair like branches after rain unpinned
To coilingly with folds of robe descend
Breast, waist and drowsing thigh, her smile
Immeasurably sad, and in one hand
The terrible bright globe.

Not to remember nor quite forget
How long she sat, trailing her fingers
Under water, marking the monkeys' anger
Shake the trees, confounds all thought:
Alone recall how she sat no longer,
Rose, and let her dreadful burden drop,

Drop, divide in ten thousand shapes
To hound me headlong through the years,
The coffee gardens, seaports, bars,
Until no siren shore, no golden sleep
But feels within it trembling like a wound
That shock of crystal brought to ground.

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VERNON YOUNG

Adventures in Film-Watching

Let every eye negotiate for itself, and trust no agent.
(Claudio in *Much Ado*)

CHILDREN OF PARADISE (Les Enfants Du Paradis—1947)[1]

Although it introduces no fresh mutation of cinema techniques, Marcel Carné's film is expressively superb, conceived symbolically and acted with histrionic elegance and feeling—a rich parable of the uses of love. The subject is Masks, enacted against the background of theatre (Paris, c. 1840) where all is simulation and dissimulation. Garance, the lunacentric figure of the story—she is first seen as a sideshow attraction, Naked Truth in a well—emerges from the crowd, from the masses of masked anonymity, the pseudo-Pierrots and, at the end, disappears into and beyond it, vainly followed by Baptiste, the Real Pierrot. Everyone finds in her what his nature and needs dictate: to Forestier, the criminal, she is someone who asks nothing and cannot be mastered; to Le Maitre, the actor, she is a night in bed (he would like to feel tragic about her but cannot); to Monsieur Coudray, the Count, she is a possession—he buys yet never owns her. To Baptiste, the mime, she is the moon, the unattainable, the Idea of Love; her carnality he at first refuses but eventually embraces, thus precipitating her flight.

Natalie loves Baptiste who loves Garance who (Baptiste believes) loves Le Maitre (who simply loves himself and the simulacra of himself, the parts he plays). Everyone, for an arrested moment as it were, has what he wants; for everyone the possession is a chimera. Natalie has Baptiste, Baptiste has Garance, Le Maitre plays the part of Othello (performing a fatal passion which, in reality, he would be too cheerful to undergo!). Coudray, an Othello without love, tries to satisfy his frigid lust-to-avenge by challenging Le Maitre to a duel. But Forestier, for whom Truth is finally violence, since everything else is unreal, saves Le Maitre by murdering the Count, and therewith satisfies his own consummate nihilism—it is the most important gesture he has ever made. (The murder takes place in a bathhouse; we see Coudray at last unclothed—which is to say, unmasked.) . . . The pantomimes of Baptiste are commentaries on his own status and on leading themes in the film. With dumb and tragi-comic eloquence, he saves Garance from arrest, holds up a clothesline for Natalie, yearns for the moon and chases butterflies. Le Maitre has greater prestige, a more fashionable fame; *he speaks lines.* Yet Baptiste is the Real

[1]The date following each title designates the year I saw the film and is not necessarily the year of the film's release.

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Thing—the silent voice of poetry. Real? Impalpable as a gyration of smoke; an epicene clown who impotently thrashes the Count's flowers and to whom Life and the Dream are one. He is left with the Dream.

An informer—perhaps the greatest rogue in this allegory—skulks through the film preaching Morality, announcing his own spurious identity at every entrance, sweating with self-pity, serving as cynical chorus to the tragedies of others, finally impeding Baptiste's pursuit of Garance in the milling crowd.

LOUISIANA STORY (1950)

Twenty-five years ago Robert Flaherty had the courage and skill to film an enthralling and unprecedented documentary on Esquimaux life; since then critical opinion has widely agreed that he can do no wrong. The fact is that he has learned no more since than the best men in films everywhere have learned —about exposition, continuity, cutting rhythms, lighting, or narrative suspense. *Louisiana Story:* any of the Boys in the Back Room—say Rossen, Curtiz, Walsh, Huston, Milestone—could have done as well with less (i.e. with even less money from Standard Oil). And they might have found in the material a subject, a point of view, a treatment.

Subject: as is, confused and neutral. Flaherty meets boy meets coon meets alligator meets oil derrick—loveless love among the bayous. What *should* be the controlling stress? The conditions of backwater life? The impact of machinery on this life? No significant comment is made on either and the two themes never merge. The people themselves seem scarcely viable for documentary treatment: the Cajun family inarticulate, inexpressive (and so unconvincingly polite with one another!); the workers on the oil tender so dry and laconic. No suggestion is made of even a banked-down conflict of interests. *Technique:* No rhythm. No meaningful progression of shots. Yards of waste footage, based on the pedestrian assumption that what goes up must be shown coming down or must be seen going all the way to the top. On the other hand, gratuitous cuts to irrelevant images: a madonna on the wall, boy's wiggling toes and so forth. For transitions, Flaherty still favors the slow fade (he seems to have forgotten the existence of the dissolve). Not a 'faked' shot in the whole film and that's the trouble, because cinema-wise, to fake, in its best sense, is simply to prepare for a sequence under the best condition of angles and light, and then to edit it carefully into the montage scheme. By Flaherty's own admission ("Robert Flaherty Talking", in *The Cinema*, 1950—Penguin Books), he is opposed to "pre-visualised" continuity. The result, in this film, is an effect not of spontaneity but of unintegrated odds and ends. The music is no help either. Virgil Thompson makes no such synchronizing contribution as he did to *The River* (1937); the score, allegedly derived from Cajun folk tunes, is thematicaly uninspired, almost as simpering as a Victor Young concoction.

Poet and *poetry* are terms persistently applied to Flaherty and his films:

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would anyone care to define the analogy at this point? Flaherty has fought against great odds, earning heartbreak as well as prestige, and the development of the non-fiction film has prospered through his initiative and sacrifice—but let's keep distinctions clean. A poem is a disciplined rhythm with some kind of lyrical direction. Flaherty has been an educator but never a poet. His films have had poetic 'touches' (intrinsic to the scene as in *Moana* or *Man of Aran*), but there was never one with anything like the conceptual beauty of Basil Wright's *Song of Ceylon* which, as well as being a document, was a dance of life.

S.O.S. SUBMARINE (Uomini Del Fondo—1950)

Made in cooperation with the Italian navy, this enacted or 'pseudo'-documentary of a sunken-submarine rescue operation is a model for precision and beauty in film-making of this kind: movement all the way, with every detail adding up to montage speed and design, achieved by rapid and ingenious cross-cutting, dramatic use of light and perspective. Bulkhead doors closing one by one from distance to closeup; the accelerated sequence where P.T. boats, hydroplanes and cruisers race to the rescue area; strange glassy light through fog and the blank light of late dawn on a flat waveless sea; the interrupted program on Radio Rome and the subsequent shots of suspended activity among the listeners: a billiard-ball's slow roll not followed up; a spoon halted over soup; waiter with arrested plate of hors d'oeuvres; dissolve from baby in crib through bubbles from submarine's escape cylinder; the abruptly fantastic ascent of a diver, attired in science-fiction costume, hoisted against a cyclorama of pale sky. And the glorious finale of lined-up sailors grouped in the rigging of waiting ships—black, white, black, white (consummation of a structural dynamic first attempted, perhaps, in *Potemkin*). No shot is ever lingered over; the waiting girls behind the dock gates and the mother talking by telephone to her boy in the submarine are given no extra stress. The film editor keeps his distance while retaining his necessary balance of the human and the accessory, the event and the emotional overtone.

In some neo-realistic quarters, the formalism of Francesco de Robertis' procedure is considered passé; a new snobbery of film criticism is arising that seems to despise directors who know exactly what they are doing with every foot of their film. If, in any instance, the art of montage were to banish the emotional experience which is, after all, the final test for the spectator, reservations would be justified. But in S.O.S. *Submarine* the narrative is not cold, it is simply well ordered; the brilliance of de Robertis' assembly enhances the eloquent central fact—man doing his dangerous job. I would advance this film as substantial evidence against the incoherent method of a *Paisan*, a *Farrebique*, a *Louisiana Story*, in none of which, to my feeling, is there a comparable effect of human endeavor boldly reconceived and rhythmically understood.

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CAUGHT (1949)

To date, I have never seen a film better directed. . . . Which is not the same as to say that *Caught* is a great film. . . . That a power-driven, psychopathic millionaire (Robert Ryan) should marry a model he encounters casually (Barbara Bel Geddes) in order to spite his psychiatrist, and that subsequently the model, after vainly trying to perform her part in the useless alliance, should learn love and social usefulness from an overworked doctor to the poor (James Mason), may sound like a more promising outline for soap opera than for a brilliant film. But a brilliant, and frequently cogent film, thanks to Arthur Laurents, scenarist, and Max Ophuls, director, the outline has become. Ophuls, with years of European film-making behind him, shaped the uneven material into a sardonic essay on one aspect of American social aspirations. The adventure of Leonora Ames in search of a fortune, if inconclusive, reverberates with acutely interpreted undertones. Always beautifully deployed in terms of approach, camerawise, every scene establishes, sometimes lightly, sometimes searingly, the atmosphere of need become greed—from the beginning, with the camera moving in over the girl and her young room-mate, lying on their stomachs in their lowcost apartment, appraising the ads in a snob-appeal women's magazine, to the millionaire Ohlrig's climactic heart-attack (neurotically induced) when, as Leonora advances to the door behind which she hears Ohlrig struggling, the camera moves back smoothly to include in the foreground of our view a sculptured lion, rampant, on the hall table.

Although virtually every sequence has its own perfect timing and wryly observed milieu, it is in the goings-on at Ohlrig's mansion that Ophuls' direction is seen at its most expedient: in the ignominous strategies of Franzi, the millionaire's 'secretary' (Kurt Bois), a little dancy man with a Continental veneer covering up his worm's function until the moment he, too, has had more than the remains of a man can take; in a home-movie-showing (itself a gem) and its acrid aftermath—Leonora shouting at the tyrannical Ohlrig across the vast space of the manorial game-room. Ophuls has an astute way with the moving camera, employing it to involve the spectator in the nervous tension of a scene. On one occasion, Franzi is awaiting Ohlrig's late arrival home, sitting blandly at the piano, playing the same tune over and over, while Leonora lies on the couch, a mile away, complaining of Ohlrig's neglect of her. Franzi responds by monotonously repeating, in a suave Viennese accent, "Tough, darling, tough!", and continuing to pound out the waltz tune. The camera accompanies Leonora's indignant progress across the room, her destination the relentless piano; by the time she has reached Franzi, slapped his face and slammed the piano-lid down on his fingers, we're right with her, lending kinetic support. . . . Of such details is the film made. If, as a story line, it fails to meet the full requirements of its socially sinister possibilities—Leonora's

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dilemma is far too simply resolved—it succeeds as a qualitatively rich lesson in the art of the film director: the art of making an unexceptional story count for more than, in its preliminary form, it would seem to suggest—or even to deserve?[2]

THE THIRD MAN (1950)

To analyze *The Third Man* strictly by the logic of literature (an improbably impudent exercise at one's first bombarded exposure to it) is to sacrifice an intense experience of a far different order. Within the framework of commercial film-making, the film is exceptional for the quality of its rhythmic structure, achieved by Carol Reed's supple interlacing of effects: the profusion of low-level, tilted and oblique shots; the short duration of separate images in narrative sequences; the almost exclusive use of the cut (there is very little tracking camera and few dissolves); the sharply selected 'off-mike' sounds; and by the urgency of the zither—not an *accompaniment* merely, but a counter-figure that contributes its own special pattern, as every good film score should. These means to fluidity, surprise and persuasion, combined with the unreal reality of war-stripped Vienna and the incidental locales—a cemetery, a Ferris-wheel, the sewers, the wide boulevards—give the whole film a percussive fluency, like a plausibly-scripted nightmare. Seldom has the actor seemed less important (which is not to say that Cotten, Howard, Welles and the Austrian contingent are not *effective*); seldom have the concatenating shocks of sound-and-visual seemed so justifiably vehement. Realism, nominally the category under which one would classify this picture, is not somehow the final impression received. A melodrama of an American pulp-writer trying to solve the death of a black-market friend assumes the character of a Hoffmanesque charade. Actuality here has a pitch reminiscent of certain early Eisenstein episodes or the opening sequences of *Variety*, wherein what is being told finds such aggrandizement by style that its essential shallowness (as idea) goes unacknowledged.

Criticizing seriously *The Third Man*'s particularities, one may easily conclude that the intellectual content is glib and go on from there to beg the question of the kind of psychological melodrama Graham Greene has been writing for years, in which serious problems of man's fate are resolved by violence and luridly devised irony. I'd rather not assist at such a digression in this context; the burning question is whether or not *The Third Man* as a *movie* experience

[2]The cinematographer was Lee Garmes, among the experts in this field. If I appear to have credited Ophuls with Garmes's talent, it is only because I recognized, from other Ophuls films, the characteristics of this director's supervision. In view of Ophuls' clarity of execution in *Caught*, and others, I would reserve judgment on the extent of his responsibility for the notorious and tiresome *La Ronde*. Since the credit titles bristled with associate producers, art directors and advisors, it seems unlikely that Ophuls himself smothered his continuity under all that rococo.

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overcomes whatever reservations one may entertain of its synopsizable content. For me it does; it left me, besides an aesthetic lift, a moody sense of tragedy muffled—as when someone is murdered next door.

Assuming the continuity of the scenario as given, there are perhaps three really superfluous moments: the teddy-bear closeup in the hospital, the parrot-biting episode when Holley Martins flees the lecture-room, and Orson Welles's overplayed finger-grappling through the sewer grille. These will be superseded in my memory by the electrical climaxes—the zither tune rising with ominous jubilation as the light flashes on to illuminate the resurrected Harry Lime; the porter's cautious revelation to Martins from an upper window, while street-sounds recapitulate the earlier 'accident', that "There vas a *third* man"; the small boy with a face like a smooth, ancient planet, blank with mindlessness, giving the hue and cry with his imbecilic, "Der wars. Ja, papa, der ist der mörder";—and by the last shot where Anna walks away from Martins and from life—Who'll be chief mourner?—and Martins lights his cigarette as all the leaves in Vienna, it seems, fall from the sad and stately trees.

THE QUEEN OF SPADES (1950)

At the second climax, the ghost of the Countess Anna visits the penurious Lieutenant Hermann to give him the dread secret of the cards which she had been too terrified to give him that snowy night he had forced himself into her solitary presence and frightened her to death. The moment depends for its great effectiveness on what has been prepared in the film up to this point. We've become accustomed to seeing the ancient Countess, a towering wig on her riveted head, supporting herself by a stick and dragging yards of skirt train behind her, looking for all the world like an overdressed snail—you can almost see the trail of slime—as she takes her painfully slow way down the halls and across the lobbies of her palace, her punctuating stick and sliding skirt making a sound best described as BOMP—pause—SWOOSH. Fittingly, then, her ghost is a *sound* ghost. Hermann's door bursts open before a blast of swirling wind; a presence, a *something* bears down on him; photographed from his witness point, table and chairs rise from the floor and fly out into space. He retreats, almost crawling to the wall; we hear the familiar BOMP—pause—SWOOSH of the stick and skirts—then the spectral voice of the old ruin, gratifying his desperate obsession!

The texture of the film throughout has to be so designed as to make inevitable our intercourse with the macabre and the supernatural; it *is* so designed, sumptuously, with fine resources of dramatic irony, symbolic impositions of image, metaphorical cuts, relational arrangements within the scene or from one scene to another. Lizaveta, the young ward stifling in the service of the withered Countess, is shown freeing birds from their cages in the market;

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at night she tosses in her bed and the voice of Hermann (who is actually wooing her solely to gain access to the palace) murmurs in her dreams, while a spider-web is superimposed across the screen. . . . A flashback to the Countess's youth, when she had visited the fearful castle of the necromancer, St. Germain, tracks her down corridors to the ultimate, self-opening door, and an impact of the unspeakable is achieved by an abrupt cut to her waiting carriage-horses, rearing in panic against the night sky. . . . Similarly, as Hermann gropes for the secret panel in the Countess's florid bedroom after she has died of fright (early in the film she had crabbily asserted, "I might die of sudden shock"), the startling cuts from Hermann's back to her open but sightless eyes enforce the terror of his position; when he stumbles away from the palace in the snow, the whole world becomes, in an overhead shot with another superimposed image, the dead woman's frozen, staring eyes.

Although it would be invidious to slight the multiple skills that organized the complex wonders of this picture—the skills of the writers (Rodney Ackland and Arthur Boys), of the designer and set decorator (Oliver Messel and William Kellner), of the cinematographer (Otto Heller) and naturally of the director (Thorold Dickinson)—it must be allowed that their manifold efforts would have missed fruition without the compelling performances of Anton Walbrook and Edith Evans. Film criticism can usually afford to disregard actors in a film's total effect, unless they are grossly bad or overwhelmingly good. Evans and Walbrook *are* overwhelming (the supporting players are perhaps too sharply British to sustain a complete sense of Russian society at the turn of the last century): Dame Evans' cracked-voice petulance, her goggling eyes and stiff neck, the mute vividness of her fear, temptation and resistance when Hermann invades her sanctuary; Walbrook's passionately mobile voice, whispering, trumpeting, lingering on vowels with love, with disdainful emphasis or with contempt; his economy of movement, the relaxed eloquence of his hands and shoulders, his swaggering pride and his broken despair (all of which casts into outer darkness the frigid Olivier): this is the very ecstasy of acting—*cinema* acting, precisely adjusted to the nuance of closeup or the bravura of distance.

A baroque film version of an occult fantasy by Pushkin: neither socially relevant, nor *avant-garde,* or Disney? I suspect it will go right on by without anyone giving it a second look, even assuming they give it a first one.

FORBIDDEN GAMES (Jeux Interdits—1952)

. . . . *after the first death there is no other.*

The opening is a concentrated classic of exposition by terror. . . . Fugitives on a country road from Paris, 1940. Hundreds of them, in cars, in carts, on foot. Murmur of mingled sounds. A jam at the bridge crossing a river. Blow-

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ing of horns, altercation. Messerschmidts zoom from the sky. The people break, scatter, flatten themselves, flee down embankments, into the fields. A rasping clatter from the strafing planes; crescendo and diminution. . . . The planes disappear and a moment's hush takes over before the fugitives surge back to the road. In that hush, the camera frames a dilapidated car with its engine left on, shuddering like an accordion or a failing heart. Again the rhythm of feverish flight. The bridge is cleared, but an ominous drone disturbs the lull. A five-year-old girl runs across the exposed bridge in pursuit of her escaping dog. The parents run to catch the child. Messerschmidts again. Couple, child and dog drop in an embracing heap. A spray, like purposeful hailstones, whips a path across the bridge and the couple rear up like galvanized frogs, with sudden and swiftly terminated grimaces of pain. The Messerschmidts vanish. . . . The child stares with incomprehension at the inert couple, touches her mother's face with experimental curiosity. She walks away, holding the dead dog by its front legs; its hindquarters dangle, shuddering spasmodically like the abandoned car. The girl wanders along the river-bank, puzzled by the odd behavior of her pet. She stands indecisively at a path from a field. A cow lumbers down it toward the river. . . . She cries. . . .

Thereafter, the film takes up the child's adoption by a clownish farming family, most responsibly by the eleven-year-old son, Michel, with whom she becomes merrily implicated in a game of Burial. This innocently macabre pastime brings to a climax the grotesque feud existing between the family and its neighbors. Over the vehement protests of Michel, the waif is subsequently removed to a city Red Cross distribution center. Here, the world she never made—where love and death are the two most shattering facts for the living to survive—enters her consciousness with a burst of illumination, and on her heartbreaking screams—"Michel! Michel! Michel!"—the picture closes.

Summary is inadequate to convey anything but the general conception, surely the most extraordinary blend of tragedy and ferocious comedy ever achieved in the history of film-making. The child's adventure is but the nucleus of a richly unsparing comment on the pathos of the irrelevant: a childrens' game of Graveyard and the rivalry of oafs, while the juggernaut of war thunders by. Statement and texture are all of a piece, in the interests of which analysis can credit without hoping to define: (of the acting, in every case, it is superfluous to speak, for this is not "acting", and Brigette Fossey seems to be the child of all time for whom the dreadful word, *poignant*, was devised—her presence is spun gold;) the lighting of René Clements' compositions (or were they Paul Joly's?) is a miracle of craft; the synchronization and editing of the sound is meticulous; the guitar themes arranged and played by Narciso Yepes constitute the most unique scoring since *The Third Man* or *Los Olvidados*. Yet the whole is, as it should be, more evocative than the sum of its parts, making that rare compound appeal to eye and ear, to the heart

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and to the intelligence which the motion picture must make if it is to be regarded as anything more important than a 'peripheral art'.

LIMELIGHT (1953)

Inside Chaplin

A creative cinematic imagination gone to seed. *Limelight* cruelly exposes the limitations of Chaplin as producer, for it is everything, most of the time, a movie *shouldn't* be: over-written, under-directed, slowly paced, monotonously photographed, fumblingly cut—and oh so *dreary!*, far beyond any justification from the milieu, a penury of the soul. . . . The first ten minutes, roughly, are good Chaplin, relatively pure cinema: camera tracking from the street into the rooming-house, around the gas-filled bedroom where the dancer lies in a coma of attempted suicide; Calvero's raffish entrance, his blurred alcoholic dignity; pantomime with the doorkey, unsteady progress upstairs, business of smelling gas, inspecting his cigar and the sole of his shoe—all shopworn but disarmingly executed trifles; his resolute rescue of the girl, absurd strategy with the landlady, the lecture to the ailing dancer on the cosmic glories of Consciousness while she retreats into a snore. Up to this point or shortly thereafter, the situation is managed with a fine balance of tragic and comic, dramatic and ludicrous, theatrical and cinematic. But from here on, Chaplin abandons all effort to keep his invention within these disciplined commutations of method. The whole gorgeous potentiality breaks down, washes away in a welter of tears, archness, smut, coincidental meetings, Pagliacci closeups, and in *talk, talk, talk.* For interminable stretches he either sets his camera while two or three actors play out a scene virtually face front, with no cuts to benefit either their comfort or the scene's modulations, or he simply moves in to a close shot from middle distance. These are almost the limits of his *motion.* When, during a ballet sequence, he suddenly gives us four overhead shots in as many minutes, the change of perspective is so unprepared for as to seem completely out of key.

Chaplin should have long ago—as far back as *Modern Times,* for instance—placed his idiosyncratic genius for pantomime and his occasionally seminal ideas at the disposal of a sympathetic director who might have created a context in which they were neither dissipated nor over-deployed. But this is to imagine a totally different personality for an artist who has increasingly become his own worst enemy from the deluded notion that it is not enough for him to be an ingenious comic—he must also be an entrepeneur with a message about faith, hope and charity who can yet afford to ignore the finer details of everything but his own performance. (He was once a master of cutting and timing, but that was in another country and the muse is dead.) In this film, where he has so much to say about pride and imagination—"My dear, you are

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such an artist!" Calvero tells the dancer, with luminous sincerity—it is all the more pitiable that during these verbal protests he is betraying the very art which has given him fame by dishonoring its fullest and liveliest possibilities and reducing it to a showcase for his personal uneasiness. (There's an embarassment of riches here for the analyst of Chaplin's bifocalism. In the person of Calvero, he airily mentions five marriages, flaunts the name of Freud, stands before his own youthful photograph in the same pose, confesses ambivalence toward the public and has nightmares of an audience walking out on him!)

GEORGE BARBAROW

Leyda's Melville—A Reconsideration

A CONVENTIONAL BIOGRAPHER WOULD waste little time on the following bit of authentic information as it appears on page 451 of *The Melville Log*[1] under the year 1852:

> PITTSFIELD June 26 *The Assessors complete a Militia Roll, including the name of*
>
> Melville Herman
>
> *& "certify that the within are liable to do Military Duty being Six Hundred & seventy two men from 18 to 45 years of age. . ."*

The conventional biographer, falling somewhere between the two extremes of the flat narrator of the life and critic of the Works, would not consider the item significant to his task or worth bringing to the attention of the eventual reader; but Jay Leyda thinks reproduction of such "trivia" essential to his method, and studs his big two-volume *Log* with similar quotations, as if to emphasize the sensational departure from ordinary biography that this book represents. But facile sensation is not his first concern. The neutral "tag-ends and jots and tittles", as one reviewer calls them, actually amount to no more than fifteen or twenty pages in aggregate, and serve a very important function: they induce and sustain an impression, or illusion, of exhaustive scholarship. Leyda, who appears to have included "everything", to the exasperation of the reviewer, is merely saying, here and there at convenient intervals, that he has *consulted* "everything". It follows that the reader is, or ought to be, assured that nothing vitally important in the mass of materials looked into has been left out. In addition, these minutiae tend to reinforce the illusion of authenticity, upon which the book leans heavily for its effect, and to provide a

[1]THE MELVILLE LOG: A Documentary Biography of Herman Melville (2 Vols.). Harcourt, Brace. 1951.

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continuing measure of contrast between Melville's imaginative flights and his routine business of living.

On occasion, such a trifle appears at a crucial juncture, generating a dramatic impact, and illuminating wide areas of significant activity. In 1848, for instance, Melville was working on *Mardi* under his usual forced draft; in the flush of quick success he was hobnobbing with New York literati; and with typical impulsive enthusiasm he was gobbling Thomas Browne, Seneca, Rabelais, Burton, and *Fingal* Macpherson, to name the most conspicuous of the archaic stylists he fancied at the time. The antique authors were having a direct, almost photographic effect upon his own style, as shown by excerpt from a longer quotation on pages 272-273 of the *Log:*

> . . . "This fire must make a desert of the land," said Mohi; "burn up and bury all her tilth."
>
> "Yet, Mohi, vineyards flourish over buried villages," murmured Yoomy.
>
> "True, minstrel," said Babbalanja, "and prairies are purified by fire. Ashes breed loam. Nor can any skill make the same surface forever fruitful. . ." (*Mardi,* CIII)

And the hitherto "untutored sailor", whose fresh, natural manner of writing was being praised both in England and the United States, making for good sales of *Typee* and *Omoo,* was also hypothecating his future, buying books from his publishers and living on his obtainable advances. Everything was going well. The first two Harper & Brothers statements had shown "Balance due Mr. Melville". Then another pops up on page 279:

> August 1 [M's 29th birthday] *Harper & Brothers sends its third account to M:*
>
> Balance due Harper & Bros. $256.03

and it is here, by placement, that the customary inclusion of small, true details for "atmosphere", if you please, turns dynamic. The first signal of trouble, whether or not so felt by Melville, is capable of amplification in the reader's imagination, which has every benefit of hindsight. It is the kind of apparently insignificant "remark", that, coming at a particular point, like "Mistah Kurtz—he dead", or "We have waited long enough", reverberates in a book, clarifying attitudes and conceptions in an unexpected and therefore exciting way. The consequences go far beyond the literal facts. The extent of the trouble, horrifying because we already know or can guess the financial fate of Melville and his *Mardi,* is further confirmed a few pages later, after Herman makes some devastating comments on a book sent to him for review, not suspecting what reviewers are about to do with his own new work. The self-confident, ebullient young man is fortified by another recorded fact which widens the discrepancy between what this writer was trying to do and what the publishers thought they were getting:

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December 5 *M receives a $500 advance from Harper's, for* Mardi

and Herman is well on the way to a defeat, moneywise, that seems to have become a tradition already among the Melvilles. It is an ironic echo of his father's endless borrowing to sustain a series of business failures. In the spring of 1851, after potboiling *Redburn* and *White Jacket* (he should also have written a Blue something-or-other), and impatient with progress on his book about whales, and owing nearly $700 to Harper's, our author goes to the money market himself:

> PITTSFIELD May 1 *M borrows $2050 from "T.D.S." for five years, at 9%.*

and writes, about this time, to Hawthorne, "Tho' I wrote the Gospels in this century, I should die in the gutter." Here is uncovered a vein of self-pity that is to be expressed in numerous ways for decades afterwards.

The *Log* is constructed of several series of continuing sources, which may be divided into categories. There is an autobiographical "line", for instance, that appears in various guises, not only in the obvious places, such as letters, journals, and quotations from Melville's books where he is describing places and things he is known to have witnessed and evidently has no motive for changing greatly, but also in what may be termed an "intellectual diary", the lists of books acquired or borrowed, and the circumstances of access, and especially in the passages checked and scored and commented upon by this enthusiastic reader. These passages, highly illuminative because most of them express ideas or sentiments Melville obviously agreed with, show direct influences upon his mercurially changing style, and his apparent inability to prevent, or even recognize, the dangers of unconscious plagiarism. Leyda takes full advantage of these materials, placing main ones in clumps, so that *his* reader cannot fail to discover their significance. Shakespeare comes on the scene in 1849, after *Mardi* is finished:

> BOSTON February 24 *M writes to Evert Duyckinck:*
>
> I have been passing my time very pleasantly here. But chiefly in lounging on a sofa (a la the poet Gray) & reading Shakespeare. It is an edition in glorious great type, every letter whereof is a soldier, & the top of every "t" like a musket barrel. Dolt and ass that I am I have lived more than 29 years, & until a few days ago, never made close acquaintance with the divine William. Ah, he's full of sermons-on-the-mount, and gentle, aye, almost as Jesus. I take such men to be inspired . . . if another Messiah ever comes twill be in Shakespeare's person.—I am mad to think how minute a cause has prevented me hitherto from reading Shakespeare. But until now, any copy that was come-atable to me, happened to be in a vile small print unendurable to my eyes, which are tender as young sparrows. But chancing to fall in with this glorious edition, I now exult over it, page after page.—

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and in the *Log* are two pages of marked quotations, capped by Melville's parody of a comment by Dr. Johnson. It is the genesis of the notoriously uncritical application of Elizabethanisms to the dialogue of *Moby Dick*, that curious compound of uncalculated imitation and unplanned allegory.

Leyda's method imposes a task upon the reader: the valuation of particular pieces of evidence, taken in conjunction with others. It goes further than his announced intention (". . . to give each reader the opportunity to be his own biographer") and requires that reader to be a critic, not only of the *Log*, but also of the materials that go to make it up. Leyda does not summarize the evidence, he presents it, making changes mostly by elision. The primary rules of the method are, 1)—to reproduce the evidence by copying it, and 2)—to exclude any comment of his own. Given these rules, the only legitimate quarrel the reader might have would come from disagreement about the quantity and quality of the material that has been left out or cut out.

The immediate effect is pleasing and salutary. The constant emphasis upon text increases and fortifies, as he proceeds, the reader's sensitivity to styles of writing, which is all to the good, since the work involves a writer. Whatever qualities Leyda may himself possess as a writer or as an overt critic could not be relevant, because they could have no possible influence upon Melville but only on the reader's attitude towards Melville, which is by now in a dazed and buffeted condition. Our great author has been for quite some time a good "field" for numerous intellectuals, ranging in class from fledgling Doctors of Philosophy to wise old metaphysicians, to say nothing of his ubiquitous "use" by cultural hot-rodders. The endless generalizing may now be backed up by concrete details which are valuable both in form and in substance:

> *In* Timon of Athens, *IV:3:*
>
> *1 Thief.* Let us first see peace in Athens. There is no time so miserable, but a man may be true.
>
> *This is explained by a footnote:* "There is no hour in a man's life so wretched, but he always has it in his power to become *true*, i.e. honest."
>
> *M has crossed out the footnote, & commented:* Peace, peace! Thou ass of a commentator! (p. 290)

This quotation does several things at once. Besides being a strong blow at the multitude of supererogatory and usually incorrect Notes that afflict so many of the Editions of Standard Authors, it reveals Melville's characteristic touchiness that at times grew into perversity, and his stylistic way of responding to his reading. Like a chameleon, he takes on the colors he touches, especially when he happens to admire something greatly. Prose responds to prose:

> *In* Hamlet, II:2, *M scores:*
>
> *Ham.* Why then 'tis none to you; for there is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so; to me it is a prison.

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> *M's comment:* Here is forcibly shown the great Montaignism of Hamlet. (p. 291)

and one parrot sets off another:

> Melville scores this in *Fingal:* Be thou soul blest, O Carril, in the middle of thy eddying winds. O that thou wouldst come to my hall when I am alone at night! And thou dost come. . . (etc. p. 285)

> Melville writes to John Murray: . . . Have a care, I pray, lest while thus parleying with a ghost you fall upon some horrible evel, peradventure sell your soul ere you are aware. . . (p. 274)

The reader cannot fail to notice numerous coincidences of this kind, especially after his ear-and-eye are made sensitive by the impact of the stylistic contrasts that appear automatically in the juxtaposition of materials unaltered except for cutting. He is forced to compare, by the nature of the *Log's* mode of communication, *what* each of its hundreds of writers is trying to say with *how* he is saying it. After nearly 200 pages of graceless, or corrupt, or clumsy writing:

> First part saw a sail and finbacks middle a Ship passed to windward latter coopering Oil spoke the Ship Acushnet went on board so ends these twenty four hours (p. 120)

or

> It is with extreme regret I bid adieu to one, who for nearly five years has treated me on all occasions with kindness. I am aware that I am taking a very singular step, and it may be a fatal one,—but I am prepared for the worst. . . (p. 105)

or

> . . . for if they understand early, that inclination must always yield to Duty, it will become a matter of course when the vacations expire, to bid a fond adieu to Friends & amusements, & return home cheerfully to their Books, & they will consequently imbibe habits of Order & punctuality, which bear sweet blossoms in the dawn of life, golden fruits in "the noon of manhood," & a rich harvest for the garners of old age—. . . (p. 27)

the superiority of Herman's ingenuous talent, at the outset of his writing career, is apparent:

> . . . All their accents were contradictory; one giving me to understand that Toby would be with me in a very short time, another intimating that they did not know where he was, while a third violantly inveighing against my companion assured me that he had stolen away & would never more come back to me. (p. 189)

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and from this point one may follow, with an increasing sense of pathos, the attempt by an exploratory, essentially pessimistic, and congenitally rebellious person, to become a recognized successful professional in a society increasingly interested in the complexities of an expanding commerce and industry and increasingly addicted to commonplace literature and philosophy. The predictable result of such a collision of purposes is that the slighter body sustains the greater effects; and Melville bounds and rebounds in various directions, at last arriving at a state of relative rest, far removed from earlier inclinations. He goes from full time prose to part time undistinguished verse, and from wide-ranging travel and vigorous outdoor gratifications of curiosity to the job of faithful clerk.

It is by contrasts, strikingly appropriate to its subject, that the *Log* proceeds, and in them it finds its justification. The significance of any one piece of evidence is found in its difference from those before and those after; no detail is absolutely trivial, as the angry reviewer implied, it is only more or less trivial than its fellows, or, to speak in a more favorable tone, more or less tremendous. And the *Log*, feeding on evidence of all sorts, exploiting vivid contrasts and discrepancies, one part illuminating others and itself being lighted, also gains strength from the comparison between what is in its pages and what is not. The rules forbid commentary and more than minimal open guesswork by the editor; conversely, they require the reader to make measurements and estimates concerning holes in the chain of information. Normally a critic or a biographer makes up a continuity in his own words; ordinarily he has come to conclusions about his subject. In the case of Melville, admittedly an enigma, such continuities and conclusions show more than ordinary variance, so that the reader of several books about Melville must guess about the extent of the evidence, as well as weighing the stated opinions of this commentator and that. If what is wanted is a set of causes for Melville's artistic hits and misses, his "quarrel with God", his drift towards and then away from Hawthorne, his use of archaic language, his desire for popularity and contempt for popular taste, his extreme shift from an active to a passive way of life, then what is needed now is something like the *Log*, which reveals in almost every page the thin bases for the theorizing that has been done so far. The reader's pleasure in reading this book comes not, however, from its proof that much criticism is silly (he should know it already), but from the attempt he must make to reconcile blanks and differences in the sources, so that what he finds, or thinks he finds, contributes mightily to the illusion of discovery, surely one of the most powerful factors in any kind of entertainment. So far as the *Log* is concerned, blanks are important because there are so many blanks about Melville. Leyda does not attempt to fill the holes; in point of fact he increases them by cutting almost every document, substituting the conventional three dots for the parts left out. This deliberate cutting has at least one very important function besides keeping

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the size of the work within bounds: it holds the reader in a state of constant realization that not everything is here, that there are holes, gaps, and blanks, as there are in the original mass of material itself. The cutting tends to increase awareness of the extent of the material that has been lost, and it emphasizes what most biography blandly skips or smooths over: the difficulty of being certain about a famous man who lived in another age.

Leyda does step out of character in part of his Introduction in order to give information about a central fact. It is the loss by destruction of a great portion of Melville's personal papers and correspondence, the staff upon which conventional biography leans. The lack in this case is doubtless the main cause for the notorious and often acrimonious conflicts of opinion about this author—they are conflicts among imaginative projections of insufficient evidence—and a negative cause for the construction of the *Log* (at moments of extreme confusion, somebody usually calls for a "look at the record"); yet we are primarily concerned with the positive virtues of Leyda's method, one of which is its adaptability to just such an "unfortunate" situation as this, the case of a voluminous author who burned many of his private papers, with accidents and descendant relatives getting rid of large parts of the remainder.

The loss, serious as it is in that it limits the number of indisputable facts available to biographers, serves as a vindication of the new method because it has led the reader's attention towards consideration of seemingly peripheral details, which may be compared with those letters, journals, and excerpts from the Works that seem reasonably autobiographical, and are also included. Leyda trusts the reader to find his way through what appears at first to be a tangle of complexities—the hostile reviewer calls it a "documentary chaos"—to discover the relevant features of each particle of evidence and to judge the size and significance of what may be missing. The continuity of the *Log* depends not entirely upon the literal material, as the word "chaos" might imply, but upon the shaping and placement of the documents as well. Nominally chronological as it is, the arrangement contains deliberately "misplaced" material, such as quotations from *Typee* and from *Toby's Own Story* and a correction by Elizabeth Melville, dated 1901, all on one page under the year 1842; nor does the continuity prohibit, it encourages, the *repetition* of quotations, like a sentence from Lemuel Shaw's letter to Melville, dated May 15, 1860, that also appears under October 10, 1847. Leyda has used the device primarily to clarify the chronology, which is his main or ruling form; nevertheless, the displacement, so far as the time of writing is concerned, the difference between its position in the chronology and its actual position in the past, is a crucial feature of the system, because it engenders an acute and continuing sense of temporal relationships. But Melville's underscorings and marginal comments in his books can never be dated exactly, so therefore, where should they be put?

The answer is that they should be put just where the editor, or arranger, or

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compiler, or what-you-may-call-him, wants to place them, depending upon his judgement of their suitability to one part of the work and not to another. Thus the group of Shakespeare quotations comes right after Melville's discovery of "the divine William", although there is no certain proof that these evidences of enthusiastic reading all belong to one date, or even one year. It follows that the main form is an *artificial* chronology, springing from the basic necessity of having a relatively simple over-all structure, within which extraordinary variations might be worked out. Needless to say, the main form does not have to be chronological, as it is here. It could be episodic, or strophic, or cyclical, and/or dateless; the location of a particular item could then be made less dependent upon the perhaps too obviously straightforward time scheme. Other forms could no doubt more easily accommodate hard-to-date entries, a number of which Leyda has arbitrarily put at the ends of various years; such an awkward expedient shows the difficulty of holding to the severe and perhaps unnecessarily rigid dating structure, whatever the advantages it possesses as a "natural" way to go about the job of presentation, beginning with Melville's birth and ending with a newspaper account of his funeral. If this seems like asking for more than the compiler set out to do, so be it. The *Log* has turned out to be more than it was planned to be (a "simple chronology of events recorded"), partly because of the useful and wholly defensible expedients of shaping, cutting, and "misplacement", and partly because such manipulation here brilliantly demonstrates the potential strength that artificially arranged source materials may have. There is more here than the eye meets at first glance, enough more to suggest that Leyda's radical and unique (in English) departure may have historic significance in literature. When he says, in the Introduction, "I trust the reader will find enjoyment in traveling alongside Melville—through good days and bad days, through great aims and trivial duties—as his body and mind grow and change—in a constant *present*, accumulating past experiences, but without knowing a future," he misses, or seems to miss, the chance to point out that, because of the inability of the subject (Melville) to have foreknowledge, he was occupied with forebodings or pleasurable anticipations, while both Leyda and the reader *are* endowed with a certain amount of foreknowledge for purposes of assessing the probable, and sometimes the true course that the "constant present" will take; and that it is artificial suspense, with the audience either behind or ahead of the actors, that generates tension, excitement, and, in the greatest works, insight. The Greek tragedy places the audience well ahead of the hero in exact knowledge of what is going to happen, while the murder mystery keeps the detective ahead of the reader. Leaving aside the relative worth of these forms, they are found to play upon contrast between what is known and what is anticipated, and the same force is at work in *The Melville Log*, even though it was apparently not deliberately attempted. How much of this time-tension may be ascribed to

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Leyda's sensibilities and how much simply to the nature of his method cannot be determined in the absence of any comparable work, but the fact of its existence provides occasion for rejoicing.

At the end, the editor suggests incompletion. There is more work to be done "on Melville". Yes, indeed. Fellows and critics and critical fellows are busily engaged. Yet what is most wanted has not been mentioned. It is an extension of the *Log* beyond its present end into a third volume, encompassing the vicissitudes of Melville's literary reputation since his death, the winds and tides of publication and criticism and scholarship, the posthumous destructions of his papers and letters, the fantastic speculations and bickerings, the good and bad guesses, and the ways that literary fashion has induced various amplifications of particular details to suit political, sociological, esthetic, and psychoanalytic trends in criticism. Such a third volume need not necessarily be composed by Leyda himself, since it would inevitably be concerned, near its end, with the conception and construction of its own first two parts, and would be empty without extracts from Leyda's own correspondence and quotations from the 1951-1952 reviews, which were no less "mixed" than those greeting H. Melville's book about whales; Leyda might be considered a bit too close to the events, or too diffident, or he might merely be too busy constructing another compilation, this one concerning the town of Amherst and its most famous citizen. Whether or not its third part is ever composed, Leyda's *Melville* already appears to be on a sufficiently high level to be set beside another radical departure undertaken in an altogether different society and century; Boswell's *Johnson*.

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WILLIAM MEREDITH

A Lot of Poems and a Bit of Theory[1]

OF THE BOOKS BEFORE US, Daniel G. Hoffman's *An Armada of Thirty Whales* is the only first volume. To acclaim a new poet as remarkable as Mr. Hoffman is a reviewer's most pleasant function, when it arises. This book is a distinguished one in many ways. It is as lucid a collection as has been offered by a serious poet for years. This lucidity, which amounts to a careful and successful attention to the poem's rational exposition, is achieved at no expense to the intellectual or imaginative force. The diction and imagery are strong, oblique and individual, but do not occasion any of the obscurity which we have come to allow as concomitant to those virtues. The verse form has an easy formality which seems to resolve another lot of contemporary difficulties. Partial and internal rhymes alternate with regular ones unselfconsciously, allowing the accuracy of phrase which is the poems' chief source of authority. The lines are usually quite regular, but accommodate colloquial and rhetorical phrases equally well, when Mr. Hoffman juxtaposes them. A poem called *Lobsterpot labyrinths* represents him well:

> *Lobsterpot labyrinths wait. A porridge*
> *of sand dries slowly. Sunlight in cages*
> *and tides that seep below the cordage*
>
> *have some connection with their waiting.*
> *Ternmewed winds pour past their ribs*
> *gathering old fishheads gaping*
>
> *with the smell of death; there is a splendour*
> *in their ramshackle spined ridgepoles*
> *structural as architecture.*
>
> *But drop one where the current yaws*
> *unlit, its ramp wrought miniature*
> *tensing to tread of knuckled claws*

[1]AN ARMADA OF THIRTY WHALES, by *Daniel G. Hoffman.* Yale Series of Younger Poets. $2.50. THE DEATH BELL, by *Vernon Watkins.* New Directions. $3.00. THE DANCING BEARS, by *W. S. Merwin.* Yale. $2.75. A SORT OF ECSTASY, by *A. J. M. Smith.* Michigan State College Press. $2.50. SELECTED POEMS, by *Mark Van Doren.* Holt. $5.00. POEMS, COLLECTED AND NEW, by *Rolfe Humphries.* Scribners. $4.50. POEMS: A SELECTION, by *Léonie Adams.* Funk & Wagnalls. $3.00. COLLECTED POEMS 1923-53, by *Louise Bogan.* Noonday. $3.00.

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that probe the cordage aperture:
Primordial patterns close like doors
upon the crusted Minotaur.

That's what lobsterpots are for;
yet traps hold pleasure free, abstract.
Did Daedalus need a beast to spur

artist to art or artifact?

Mr. Hoffman must have worked hard on these poems, but they do not show the characteristic flaws of belabored verse. Some poets break a poem's back in the course of tidying it up: I think Housman did this to some of his poems in which, metrically at least, there is no tension left. Others leave untidy evidence of their wrestling match with the muse, so that you feel they won it, if at all, by a close decision: Hart Crane's unsuccessful poems, for instance, certainly bespeak no lack of work. Daniel Hoffman has apparently learned to make his poems bear his weight. They are crafty and craftsmanlike.

The reader has difficulty with certain of Vernon Watkins' poems and there is evidence that Mr. Watkins did, too. *The Death Bell,* his new book, divides about half and half between poems which are successfully and concretely realized, and those which seem either to begin or to end in a *poetical* rather than a real image. In the latter group, the language runs to archaism, abstraction and hyperbole. The adjectives: timeless, magnanimous, sublime, holy; the verbs: spurn, enshrine, transfigure, bereave; the nouns (or props): portent, soul, moan, loins—useful words, all—are too frequent, too crucial, and too little founded on concrete circumstances. The successful poems, which as most readers will recall are very successful indeed, are the ones where the poet actually observes the occasion of his emotion and finds an unstrained imagery in or near the experience. These tend to be the shorter poems, often originating in the contemplation of a simple object—an old volume of Dante and Guido, a sea-bird, a shell. The section of the book comprising ballads is of course less subject to the dangers of abstractness. But here, too, it seems that the most successful are those which have the simplest and clearest exposition: *The Ballad of Culver's Hole* tells of a smuggler hiding his loot; *The Ballad of the Trial of Sodom* is about Abram's bargaining with the Lord.

The title poem is accompanied by a prose analysis which I think is a valid alleviation of the weakness which the other long poem, *Niobe,* shows: a privacy of imagery like that of T. S. Eliot's less successful poems. But I feel that Mr. Watkins is better off when he has his own images than when he works with Donne's bell, Laocoon, or Abel.

One renews without hesitation Mr. Watkins' Welsh Bardic License. For one thing, his poems have a splendid sound to them all. For another, he has

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great formal skill. But the criticism which his humbler poems themselves level at the high-falutin ones, which *A Book from Venice* makes of *The Turning of the Stars*, for instance, is this: a poem's work cannot be done by rhetoric; it must be done from inside, the clarified experience speaking its own clear language. The quotations are partial to this view:

Books are like water. Silver, laughing river
From Venice, making light play after two hundred years;
Yes, here are Dante and Guido, the companions,
Fountain ascending.

They rise from sandgrains where they seemed forgotten.
Sound here through leaf-light hooves of early singing,
These Tuscan poets. Fresher breaks their morning,
Found at the sea's edge.

—A Book from Venice

* * *

Verse is a part of silence. I have known
Always that declamation is impure.
This language best fits prayer,
The crystal night
Teeming with worlds in mathematic height.
Prodigious darkness guards its undertone,
And though that wheel of air
Seems to leave nothing earthly to endure,
The likeness, not the original, is gone.

—The Turning of the Stars

W. S. Merwin's second book, *The Dancing Bears*, maintains the standards of excellence that were widely remarked when he published *A Mask For Janus* two years ago. The chief virtue of his work, apart from an impressive virtuosity, seems to me to lie in its crystalline imagery. The clarity is not of language alone, nor of the details selected (which is how the Imagists were clear), but simply of the meaning of the images. A zodiac poem provides separable examples of how Mr. Merwin handles an image:

VIRGO

Not so much as a song
In my most silver dream
Has ravished my ear.
Damage by beast and man
And by the scandalous sun
Sing out, but I am not there.

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SAGITTARIUS

All quarry flees. The arrow
Drawn always to my ear I still
Have not let fly, and yet they fall.

Or this Elizabethan grotesque from a *Song of Three Smiles:*

If you must smile
Always on that other,
Cut me from ear to ear
And we all smile together.

The longest poem in the book is called *East of the sun and west of the moon.* It runs to more than 500 lines, and its marvelous imagery could sustain a colony of MLA scholars through a mild winter: to count the images, to demonstrate their unusual density, to show how they cooperate, and how they have been selected to a particular effect and from what Romantic and Renaissance sources. The poem is among Mr. Merwin's most successful. An allegorical narrative, it accommodates all the luxuriance and learning of his vocabulary and turns them to its purpose. The poems that fail to accommodate these characteristics (particularly the last two of three *Cansos* which end the book) have a verbosity which at worst chokes up the imagery:

Or may the mind of heaven be a mind
Of questions? As: is there not a country
Or the negation of a country, where
The mortal tree where the bird sang, the season
Where you walked living, once existed only
In their own deaths before their tides and branches
Were from negation made?

I intend to quote unfairly: these images have a home in the poem, but by themselves they show what can happen when Mr. Merwin lets his language get away. Ezra Pound's influence is still strong on him, and occasionally results in rhetorical quagmires which Pound would never commit or condone. In the present volume only four poems, the first, the last two, and one in the middle called *The Passion,* seem to me to be in any serious way impaired, and these by such faults as are not in the scope of any mediocre poet. The total effect of the book is of a major talent.

The Canadian poet A. J. M. Smith published his first book of poems, a good one called *News of the Phoenix,* more than ten years ago. Apart from the preconception, so unnerving to poets, that their second volume should be at least twice as good, easier to read, and more like Rilke and Skelton, *A Sort of Ecstasy* is a satisfactory successor. Mr. Smith lives with abstractions rather

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more intimately than Vernon Watkins. The Furies, the Dead, the Common Man of this book are at once less ambitious and more vital conceptions than Mr. Watkins'.

The language of these poems is their least distinguished quality. The poet falls from time to time into two modern clichés, a stock irony (he calls poems *Business as Usual 1946* and *Fear as Normal 1954*) and a stock apocalypticism, if I have the right word:

> *Turn over World! O monstrous World!*
> *I stare with down-dropped eyes*
> *Below the World to where the stars*
> *Are littered on the skies.*

If these clichés seemed congenial to the author, there the matter would end, but the fact is Mr. Smith's voice is a distinct and lyrical one. A poem called *The Sweetest Heresy* introduces in this volume ten pages of very successful and original lyrics. This seems to me to be the best part of the book, unless it be the French Canadian (originally French) ballad which he renders as *Brigadier*. These poems all seem to be spoken in the poet's own voice. The more abstract and less successful ones do not. Mr. Smith is a simpler and more powerful poet than he sometimes gives himself credit for.

From my remarks about these four poets, it must be clear that I am documenting a rather old position about communication. I have seen a relationship between the excellence of each poet and his own kind of poetic self-reliance. Precise rather than diffuse or ambiguous exposition and statement; observed rather than abstract or allusive imagery; individual and natural rather than conventional language—these are baldly the virtues which I think these poets have worked out in their best poems. They make for communication.

II

With the present year's crop of Selected and Collected and Complete Poems added to the ones that have come out since the end of the war, most of the enduring work of an age of English poetry, or of a very long generation, has been reprinted in something approaching final form. It is not entirely arbitrary to make a generation of the poets born between 1865 (to take Yeats as the first, as he is the giant, among them) and 1900, although it must surely make the younger members of the group nervous. They were all pioneers, bold or reluctant; they came here before it was cleared.

And what a generation they are for solid accomplishment, for scope, and—one can say it now that so many of them are summing themselves up or have been summed—for plain perseverance in the craft. Their volumes con-

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tradict a couple of still-popular fallacies: that the past half-century was a cruel one to poets; and that the lyric impulse normally is fulfilled and dies young. Our long talks about Great Art in a Fragmentary Culture had perhaps convinced us that the times were inimical to all art. Rimbaud and Hart Crane may have seemed to confirm the attractive myth that all good books of verse are thin and in some sense posthumous. These sturdy volumes of personal reckoning set us straight on both scores.

And yet there is evidence, in the poetic lives which are the plots of these books, that the poets themselves were half-prey to these two misconceptions. At any rate, they had to learn for themselves and with great difficulty where the poetry of the twentieth century lay, and how to negotiate it. Some of them did indeed feel that the times were inimical to all art. And some also had trouble finding what their themes were, once the exclamations of youth, the spontaneous volume one, had passed. They were tempted to believe that about the slim posthumous volume.

I think we see evidence of an abnormal distrust of their times in a characteristic pattern: from Yeats to Frost to Tate, there is a protraction of the period of poetic adolescence—the imitative or conventional or simply timid period—as if each had trouble finding and believing in his own voice. When found and trusted, it is strong and sure, but just by the calendar this happens very late for these poets, twenty years later, on an average, than for Milton or Wordsworth or Auden. Eliot is the exception.

And another pattern suggests that a number of them did not foresee their poetic destinies with any confidence or clarity: there is often a null in their poetic lives when either they stopped writing verse or you wish they had stopped, this to be followed by astonishing renewals of power which surprised themselves as much as anyone. It is not unusual among the poets of this generation for them to set out on a new poetic career with greatly increased poetic powers after reaching fifty.

Mark Van Doren speaks in the introduction to his *Selected Poems* of "the copious poet he seems to have become". It is a surprise many of his readers will share. These 226 pages contain a great deal of fine verse; they represent him well, and therefore contain some very weak ones, too. The long poems—*A Winter Diary* especially—and the conventionally formal ones, particularly the sonnets which follow the diary, reveal his chief weakness. A lack of selectivity in word and image results in a gossipy quality, cheerful, garrulous. Rhyme and meter seem to coax him into saying more than he means. Nobody fills out an iambic pentameter line more generously, correctly or monotonously than Mr. Van Doren when his interest has flagged for a moment:

> *Yet over in the corner, white and square,*
> *Is the big bin with our potato-share.*

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Then seven barrels of apples standing by.
We brought them down a ladder when a high
Stiff wind was there to whip us, hand and cheek;
And wheeled them to the barn, where many a week
They filled the tightest chamber; but they found
More certain safety here below the ground:

His strengths are two: forceful and accurate observation, and, what develops more consistently in his later poems, an unusual emotional depth. A number of his poems from nature have the power and authority of Robert Frost but a flavor of their own. *Time and Water* (about the beaver), *The Translation* (the animals' view of mowing), *Beastless Farm, Crow, Pigeon*—these subjects seem to dispel rhetoric and platitude, as the poet lets nature (so it seems) make her own images and comparisons. It is a paradox that Mr. Van Doren seems much surer of his technique in free and blank verse than in rhyme.

The poet's full strength of emotion becomes consistent in his work at about the middle of the book. With the volume called *The Seven Sleepers* (1944) Mr. Van Doren is quite free of poetic gentility, his form of poetic adolescence. He says serious things with a blunter and more direct poetry and a firmer vocabulary. *The Unknown Army* and *Schooltime*, two angular war poems, lead on to meditative lyrics like *How We Shine, Silver Wedding* and *Bailey's Widow* which represent an astonishing increase in power. A few poems in this book, *Odysseus, Lady of Where She Lived*, and *To Homer* among them, should protect Mr. Van Doren from patronizing critics and reviewers forever.

Rolfe Humphries' *Poems, Collected and New* is the most complete poetic biography of the books under review here. In his honesty Mr. Humphries reprints some real period pieces whose only merit is their insight into the period. *Europa*, the opening poem, is pretentiously Freudian and perhaps ought now to be read as light verse. Other early poems advance a dated liberalism which must have taken courage to reprint. Mr. Humphries took as long as anyone in his generation to strike his own note. His conservatism is that of the Georgian poets. He seems hardly to have flirted with Eliot or Pound. He is given to lush, Swinburnian music: a nine line poem opens "The lake darkens, The lake darkens. . ." and closes "So—till the lark wakens". He is sometimes brutally didactic:

For he remembered he had heard
Poplars would never touch each other
No matter how their limbs were stirred.

There was a symbol for his shield!

He wrote exercises in imitation of A. E. Housman which are no more interesting than the ones Housman wrote. His titles sometimes cripple a poem in

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explaining it (a fault he shares with Mark Van Doren, who is apt to maul the crucial phrase of a poem by setting it as title).

All of these weaknesses are redeemed in Mr. Humphries' work by the course that work has taken: over the thirty years this book covers one is aware of a single, moderate, dedicated pursuit of poetry. And being a man of moderate poetic gifts—one does not say it patronizingly—Mr. Humphries presents a particularly interesting example of how a poet responds to all sorts of fashion, and how he collects the parts of his own voice as he goes along. His growth has been constant, but there are sudden increments: *Proteus* seems to me to be the first poem to predict his maximum range. Other considerable poems are *Hawthorne Court, Rhonabwy's Dream* and *The Bells.*

About all this reviewer dares to do with Léonie Adams' *Poems: A Selection* is to call admiring attention to them and attribute a few adjectives as abstruse as the ones they employ. They are splendid, graceful and wilful poems, and very difficult to discuss. In the course of thirty years they have been assessed conventionally enough, but in my opinion they have not been read as widely as their excellence deserves, nor dealt with critically as severely as their obscurity warrants.

Clearly Miss Adams is an artist who knows what she is after. It is a matter of texture, I think: she stuffs a poem full of special words, the way one has seen an orange encrusted with cloves. The words take on a texture of their own, the poem is dried out and spiced naturally, only slightly participating in the scent, which remains the scent of cloves. Miss Adams' poems are successful sometimes in rather impolite contradiction of my theory about clear exposition. I have yet to break the one called *Thoughts on a Violet,* but I can almost believe (that is to say I don't for a minute believe) Mr. Eliot when he says that a poem can be enjoyed before it is understood. The statements was interesting but tough, as Huck says. Other poems of hers bear me out, though: *Grapes Making, Song for a Country Fair* are beautifully lucid. You do not forget these poems. Miss Adams is a considerable challenge to the critic. The reviewer she generally routs.

Louise Bogan's *Collected Poems* 1923-53 span and reflect the same period as Rolfe Humphries' and have certain points of fashion in common with them. But Miss Bogan has been saved by her purity of taste, and perhaps by her wit, from most of the errors of fashion. She has an individual diction which is fastidious but curiously powerful. One is surprised at how much she can do with rather lady-like words, and reminded of how Emily Dickinson managed her very much more restricted vocabulary. This is from one of three new poems in the book:

> *All has been translated into treasure:*
> *Weightless as amber,*
> *Translucent as the currant of the branch,*
> *Dark as the rose's thorn.*

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Where is the shimmer of evil?
This is the shell's iridescence
And the wild bird's wing.

It takes character not to quote her epigrams, and I have not enough to avoid naming two of the best: *Several Voices out of a Cloud* and *To An Artist, To Take Heart*. The poems that are least successful fail by a kind of calculatedness: the last poem in the book has a spontaneity which is Miss Bogan's at her best.

R. W. FLINT

What Price Glory?

A FABLE, by *William Faulkner*. Random House. $4.75.

THE BOOK, AS EVERYBODY SEEMS TO AGREE, is an earnest and high-minded mistake. If Faulkner had set out to follow Falstaff's advice to "purge . . . and live cleanly", he could scarcely have found a fitter vehicle of purgation. Not only has he given in to nearly every temptation that has ever threatened him, he has inflated his failings to monumental proportions. The novel's energy and audacity make one gasp as its heaviness makes one groan. It is the sort of book the publishers might well have asked us to read only on Good Friday—standing, hatless and bowed. As it is, they have adorned its cover and punctuated its chapters with heavy black crosses as if, for all the world, it were the last will and testament of Lloyd C. Douglas.

The gimmick has always had an inordinate appeal for Faulkner: the main plot of *A Fable* is an elaborate gimmick of the most dismal sort, namely, a puzzle whose "solution" is obvious at the outset. His fondness for military protocol has often verged on sentimentality; here it plunges over the verge. He has never been much at ease out of earshot of those twin symbols of Faulknerian stability, the mule and the county sheriff. Europe in general and the first World War in particular have usually overwhelmed his common sense with inchoate feelings. I can't go as far as Norman Podhoretz[1] and agree that this novel shows him to have always been, after all, a "simple man", a man, if I understand Mr. Podhoretz correctly, without enlightened irony or "ideas"—"the wish to understand the world"; "the qualities of reasonableness, moderation, compromise, tolerance, sober choice—in short the anti-apocalyptic style

[1]In an essay, "William Faulkner and the Problem of War"; *Commentary*, September 1954.

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of life brought into the modern world by the middle class". This definition of "idea" is more limited than most: it hardly seems to account for either the Faulkner reality or the full meaning (or meanings) of the word. But Mr. Podhoretz has chosen the right moment to launch his Trillingesque attack on Faulkner (whom he considers to be one of the two or three best living novelists notwithstanding). This is the most embarrassingly *literary* of the novels since *Sanctuary*, hence from a literary standpoint the least satisfactory. As a matter of fact, it is everywhere vitiated by rampaging ideas, ideas divorced and disembodied, muddled and self-defeating.

Faulkner, like Joyce, has the genius for *bassesse* of a true visionary, not the journalistic *bassesse* of Céline which becomes impressive only through piled-up detail, but the power to look upward from so far below the normal plane of vision that a very small world becomes a very large one without losing its true shape. The Yoknapatawpha people, as Mr. Podhoretz discovers, are nearly all obsessedly inarticulate, beating their heads like maddened animals against the bars of their cage. Nevertheless, they share in simple common actions, and the actions make a world "of itself alone serene, of itself alone triumphant". How well Faulkner asserts the limits of this world in the closing lines of *The Sound and the Fury!*

> Ben's voice roared and roared. Queenie moved again, her feet began to clop-clop steadily again, and at once Ben hushed. Luster looked quickly back over his shoulder, then he drove on. The broken flower drooped over Ben's fist and his eyes were empty and blue and serene again as cornice and façade flowed smoothly once more from left to right, post and tree, window and doorway, and signboard, each in its ordered place.

It is well to contemplate the shambles of *A Fable* with this passage (and this novel) in mind. Faulkner's good instincts are profoundly temperate as well as orderly, but they deal profoundly only with experienced realities, not, as in *A Fable*, with received ideas. He is wisely critical of modern life, but to a degree unusual even among novelists, can criticize convincingly only in terms of tone, character, temperament and conduct.

Faulkner on home ground has a wonderfully quizzical and impassive sense of pathos. Episodes like Cash Bundren's construction of the coffin in *As I Lay Dying*, or the failure of Theophilus McCaslin in "The Bear" to make anything at all out of young Percival Brownlee, the slave, evoke a common-sense world with great verve and economy. The seething climate of Yoknapatawpha is sweetened and set in perspective. If Mr. Podhoretz were right in thinking that obsession is the *only* motor in Faulkner's people, this pathos would be quite absent. The middle class may be dead set against obsession, but it would understand itself a good deal better if it could manage to read Faulkner's best novels with some of the affection with which they were written.

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A mistake of the dimensions of *A Fable*, however, is something more than an error of taste. It reveals Faulkner in the grip of his own blindest obsessions, unable, like the Rev. Gail Hightower in *Light in August*, to choose between the gospel and the sword. This sorry mish-mash of undigested Dostoievskian theologism, Kiplingesque heroics and turbid oratorical pageantry may, of course, like Hardy's *Dynasts* or Robinson's Arthurian poems, announce the evaporation of a once powerful "provincial" vision. The burden of being a Great Figure may have become overwhelming. On the other hand, the novel may just as well be a nine-years' distraction to "get a load off his mind" and let the Mississippi material lie fallow. The gimmick was suggested to him in Hollywood; in Hollywood it should have remained. The book's vitality is immense but flat, like a patriotic post-office mural.

Faulkner's main intention, however, is as fine as his execution is heavy—nothing less than a powerful assault on modern war as an instrument of policy; elegizing its glories as dead with the first World War, and rubbing in its miseries and stupidities. Crane attempted something similar in *The Red Badge of Courage* and succeeded magnificently. Crane never for a moment lets us forget the pity, tragic beauty and simplicity of a high moment of war. His ideas are wholly embodied and submerged in a series of rhythmically organized, symbolic episodes. Faulkner's ideas stick out squawking like a bunch of chickens in a crate. Unable to improve on St. Matthew, whom he parallels, he resorts to an oratory whose periods are all out of tune with the lyric character of what they evoke. One supposes that this is meant as a substitute for the peaceful authority of the Seven Last Words. The contrast is sufficiently ironic; it may shock us into a sense of our loss of such authority. But that is all it does.

A Fable, then, is neither satisfactory martial elegy nor a well-organized symbolic parable. When he should be abstract, he is literal; when he should be literal, abstract. We are asked to accept the French marshal (naturally confused in the reader's mind with Foch or Tolstoy's Kutusov) as none other than a *persona* of God Himself; not only that, he is also sometimes the Tempter and sometimes an up-to-date Grand Inquisitor preaching a caesarist mystique lifted baldly (it seems) from *The Possessed*. Faulkner's stories of military derring-do have a certain high-spirited charm. Here the high-jinks have neither charm nor high spirits, but a strained portentousness (with the Grand Old Man demonstrating his worldliness by saying "Schnapps, General, of course" to the German officer, as he quietly pushes the port bottle across to an Englishman). This part of the book is either stalled in a cumbersome allegory, following the New Testament with distracting literalness, or reaching in vain for some sort of never-never plainness. In *Absalom* there is a movingly simple story beneath the foolishness: in *A Fable* when we dig beneath the foolishness we find a resonant void; in a word, more foolishness, a play of subtleties which only draw

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the episode out without adding to its interest. He should either have stuck to the real Foch as Tolstoy stuck to the real Kutusov, or used Crane's symbolist technique. But not both at once.

The poor, speechless, Christlike corporal is virtually drenched with advice, exordium and prognostication in the novel's closing pages. Some, to be sure, is disarmingly homely. Quoth the marshal: "Listen to this. It happened in America, at a remote place called by an Indian name I think: Mississippi; . . ." But it is the Tempter and *not* the saving corporal who echoes Faulkner's Stockholm speech to the effect that Man and his folly will "prevail". The corporal settles for endurance. Mr. Podhoretz is right in saying that Faulkner has been paying Man some fairly hollow compliments of late. This division of wisdom between a glib Old Dispensation (with the latest word from Mississippi) and a triumphantly speechless New might be more acceptable if the Old, for all his glibness, were not so much more appealing. The pages describing the marshal's funeral are among Faulkner's most powerful.

The parts of the book not directly involved in this allegorical-ironic paralleling of the biblical Passion present a series of contributory images, Faulknerian "terrific stases" of life stripped down to its core of compassion, selflessness, courage, devotion and endurance. Just because Faulkner knows so well what virtues he wants to celebrate, these episodes have a certain massive, cloudy splendor. The best of them is an adaptation of his *Notes of a Horsethief*, an impressive but somewhat too ingenious and highly-colored animal fable reminiscent of Lawrence's *St. Mawr* and the Lawrencian figure of the noble groom. It is typical of the difference between the two novelists that Lawrence's best energies should go to the horse, and Faulkner's to the groom. (Lawrence's animals are often a bit more "human" than his people, less monochromatic.) *St. Mawr* is a rejection of human society in favor of a Wordsworthian vision of natural forces. The horse wanders off into peaceful domesticity, leaving the American divorcée alone on a mountainside to experience her vision. Faulkner's horse, in being sublimated into the book's general scheme of death and transfiguration, comes off less well than Lawrence's. *A Fable* has all the faults and some of the virtues of *The Plumed Serpent*, the same queer mixture of specious and genuine vitality.

Smog, rhetorical smog, is generated by the hard ceiling which the biblical events place over Faulkner's imagination.

> . . . to be no symbol nor cradle nor any mammalian apex, harbor where the incredible cockleshell of his invincible dream made soundings at last from the chartless latitudes of his lost beginnings and where, like that of the enduring sea, the voice of his affirmation roared murmuring home to the atoll-dais of his unanimity where no petty right, but blind justice itself, reigned ruthless and inattentive amid the deathless smells of his victories: his stale tobacco spit and sweat.

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This sort of thing, mainly ironical camouflage or atmospheric filler in the best novels, has moved over into the driver's seat. The passage describes a courtroom dais in the American South. Faulkner is saying that this dais is not a symbol "nor cradle nor any mammalian apex" (whatever that may be) but just a simple necessity. The passage resembles one of those wonderful long paragraphs of ironic qualification (or disqualification) in late James, ending with a crashing statement of fact. But Faulkner is having his symbol and disavowing it too (Jame's method) without there being any real justification at this point in the story for either a symbol or the lack of one. A plain, ordinary dais would have done much better. Where *everything* is more or less symbolic, to multiply the symbolism in this wanton fashion is to subtract from its force.

Malcolm Cowley has called *A Fable* a "mastodon" amongst contemporary fiction. Perhaps that is true. It is not its mastodonic qualities, however, that interested me so much as certain passages which display Faulkner's powers in something like their original brightness. The clearest note is struck in the middle of the novel, a passage describing evening in a French encampment during a period of false armistice.

> And that was all. Then it was sunset. As they stood in the turning flood of night, the ebb of day rang abruptly with an orderly discordant diapason of bugles, orderly because they all sounded at once, discordant because they sounded not one call, but three: the *Battre aux Champs* of the French, the *Last Post* of the English, the *Retreat* of the Americans, beginning inside the city and spreading from cantonment and depot to cantonment and depot, rising and falling within its own measured bruit as the bronze throat of orderly and regulated war proclaimed and affirmed the end of day, clarion and sombre above the parade rite of *Mount and Stand Down* as the old guards, custodians of today, relinquished to tomorrow's, the six sergeants themselves appearing this time, each with his old guard or his new, the six files in ordered tramp and wheel facing each its rigid counterpart juxtaposed, the barked commands in the three different tongues ringing in the same discordant unison as the bugles, in staccato *poste* and *riposte* as the guards exchanged and the three sentries of the new ones assumed the posts. Then the sunset gun went from the old citadel, deliberate and profound, as if a single muffled drumstick had been dropped slowly and deliberately, until at last, with no suture to mark its close, it was lost in the murmur of bunting with which the flags, bright blooms of glory myriad across the embattled continent, sank, windless again, down.

This use of extremely deliberate language and the plainest rolling rhythms is something that no other living novelist could manage so well or in quite this way.

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THOMAS BARBOUR

Marginalia for a Myth

AGAMEMNON, a verse play in four acts by *William Alfred*. Knopf. $3.00

No question of it, Agamemnon of Argos was a husband to try the patience of any wife. His departure for Troy and the wars was signalized by the sacrifice of his own daughter; and, when he returned at last to relieve his family of their ten-year burden of anxiety, he expected them to entertain an exceedingly fretful and neurotic young lady, who, though represented as his slave, was clearly also his paramour. It was a trifling, but nonetheless aggravating, insult to add to these deep injuries that his first words to his long-suffering spouse upon his arrival were to chide her peevishly for the elaborateness of her preparations for his welcome. And yet a wife of stouter stuff than Clytemnestra might have understood that his conduct, irritating to say the least, bespoke only his acknowledgement of the demands of policy, the etiquette of war, and the austerity of his piety; but Agamemnon's queen was so far unwilling to read his actions thus that, with the complicity of her lover, she contrived to cut him down with the first convenient axe. The history of this accursed king would lack something of its tragic elevation and much of its continuing significance if his death were to be accounted for simply as the consequence of specific grievous acts riling an unloving and unfaithful mate. It may be an impudence to reduce such a tragedy to a formula, but is there not at the heart of it, when the particulars have been stripped away, a fundamental and still most meaningful incompatibility: the conflict of a man whose public dedication has eclipsed his private humanity with a woman whose personal desires have blinded her to the official responsibilities presupposed in the nature of her marriage? It is, after all, the theme that has been cheapened into the marriage-*versus*-career cant of the soap-operas and Hollywood gossip columns. William Alfred is to be thanked for recognizing the deep roots of the story in our consciousness and for restoring it to something of its ancient and deserved dignity.

He has not completely succeeded, however, in transforming it into a satisfactory play. This *Agamemnon* does not seem, somehow, to "build"; and I think Mr. Alfred's difficulties chiefly stem from his too great attentiveness to the accidents rather than to the substance of the struggle he has chosen to describe. The elements of his tragedy are all here—more, indeed, than are perhaps entirely necessary—, but there is lacking a cohesive and impulsive force to bind these elements together and point them towards an inevitable catastrophe. Of the twelve scenes he has contrived, too many fail to require their

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successors; any of a number of them, however engaging in themselves, might have been dropped from the play without our being aware of the omission. Insofar as he has chosen one issue for his principal emphasis, he has elected to string his pearls on a thread too delicate to stand the tragic tensions of his myth.

This issue is Mr. Alfred's own invention—at least it is not to be found in the Aeschylean version—, and it strikes me as a rather unfortunate one. He has imagined that Clytemnestra has been kept in ignorance of the facts of Iphigenia's death, believing her daughter to have been the victim of a fever. In the opening scene, we are shown the Regent-Councillors of Argos deciding for the execution of a renegade, who knows the true story of the sacrifice at Aulis and who threatens to use his information to blackmail the returning king. Later, the execution having been accomplished, the councillors are represented as questioning the wisdom of their choice, expressing a kind of moral fatigue from having so long suppressed the truth. Then, in the penultimate scene, a Grecian mother, embittered against Agamemnon for her son's death in the war, breaks into Clytemnestra's presence and spills the story that the councillors have no longer the strength to deny. Meanwhile, mirroring this theme in a sort of sub-plot, a series of scenes present Cassandra on the ship returning to Argos thawing out Agamemnon's coldness and wringing from him a confession of his guilt in his daughter's sacrifice.

The Iphigenia motif is developed more thoroughly than any other in the play, and apparently Mr. Alfred intends that it should have a consequential, if not indeed crucial, bearing upon the harried queen's catastrophic decision. The unhappy effect of this emphasis is to disengage our attention from Clytemnestra herself and focus it upon events outside of her. When we should be preoccupied with the question of whether she will have the courage (or weakness) to murder her husband, we find ourselves asking, "Will the regents be able to keep her ignorant of the facts of Iphigenia's case?" The playwright makes Agamemnon's fate appear to hinge upon the introduction, more or less *ex machina*, of the Grecian mother; and doing so, he deprives his play of some of the subjective force of tragedy, bringing it perilously close to melodrama. Vengeance for Iphigenia's death was surely not the prime motive for Clytemnestra's bloody act; in this case, retribution is better taken for the excuse than the cause (or one of several excuses, as Aeschylus tells the story). As I have suggested, a different sort of wife, who was perhaps more appreciative of the strategic necessity for the sacrifice and of Agamemnon's reluctance to perform it, would have reacted otherwise under the circumstances. Mr. Alfred has taken greater pains to elaborate the circumstances than to reveal the basis of the reaction, that profound incompatibility that lies at the heart of his dark legend.

If he has left the center of his story somewhat obscured, he has, nonetheless,

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provided some remarkable illuminations in the margins of the myth. There is considerable compensation for Mr. Alfred's failure to construct a totally effective play in his sensitive eye and ear and keen judgement in the selection of details, by reason of which his separate scenes should make for striking theatre since he has been able to breathe into them the excitement of life. And, though he has not always been able to touch their deeper motivations, he has given to his characters a surface reality of extraordinary vividness. Of the twenty-six busy hours he has sought to explore that preceded Agamemnon's doom, a number of moments, some significant, some relatively trivial, have been made memorable: an old man's recollection of having seen Leda in his youth; the sudden revelation of Clytemnestra's agonizing rivalry with her more glamorous sister; the blunt practicality of Cassandra giving first-aid to a maimed soldier; the solicitude of his friends as Aegisthus departs for his appointment with destiny; the fretfulness of the councillor Gnatho, fed up with telling lies—the list is not, nor can it easily be, exhausted. It may be that Mr. Alfred's very capacity for particularisation has distracted him from the total view (I find myself thinking of the old classic arguments for unity); but I am, nevertheless, loath to disparage his descriptive talent, though it threatens perhaps to undo him as a dramatist.

In great measure this talent is supported by the graceful control of his language. I might quibble over a few instances where his rhetoric seems a bit too turgid to be quite stageworthy and a few others where his imagery seems to have been elaborated for its own sake in a manner that may suit a Christopher Fry comedy but is hardly congenial to Mr. Alfred's starker purposes. These are exceptions, however, that should not divert us from his abundant successes. Working within the confines of a fairly strictly observed blank-verse pattern, he has evolved a speech medium that manages to be dignified without being pompous or archaic. It is a good, all-purpose diction that does not jar in the transitions from character to character or situation to situation. It can, and does, support a considerable poetic intensity when it is required to do so; and, when the voltage of the poetry is low (as it must often be in any efficient verse drama), it can be suitably relaxed without becoming either prosaic or sloppy. Seven lines out of context may provide an example that is characteristic, not exceptional; this is good stuff:

Child, there can be no love without commitment.
The whole of love's but a suspended war,
In which two armies, with an awkward mercy,
Withold much ammunition each could use.
You have used that ammunition. It's all over;
Lady, the love is over. There is nothing here
But a wasted field between opposing guards.

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MARVIN MUDRICK

Humanity Is the Principle[1]

THE 'TWENTIES MADE NOSTALGIA a marketable literary commodity in America. For the latest post-war generation, deficient in memories of its own, the impossible past is coming to identify itself, appropriately, with the age bounded by *Gatsby* and *The Sun Also Rises* (themselves, in their time, emblematic of a lost impossible present).

The Huge Season, says the blurb, "is a story about some characters today who have survived from Fitzgerald's and Hemingway's 'twenties, characters who might have been kinsmen of Jake and Lady Brett and Gatsby." This description is accurate as far as it goes, if one insists on the strict myopic literariness of Mr. Morris's pastiche: his characters are indeed grossly derived from Fitzgerald and Hemingway, and in his own book complicated by nothing more independent or up-to-date than the author's smeary irony and his reading of recent headlines. Charles Lawrence, the cryptic and beautiful tennis-player—a blurred snapshot of one of Fitzgerald's rich-boy athletes—appears first in an old blurred snapshot: "You can see that he takes the game seriously. I do not mean that he takes it professionally," says the narrator, before striking back at the doltish present: "If you think that great champions are made by eating Wheaties, that great songs can be written on commission, you will be inclined to feel that I am reading something into this photograph." Lawrence, "the man in whom the sun rose", having killed himself, "That had been the end—but not officially. Officially, the survivors had gone on to die off piecemeal, as playboys or professors, or reappear as fossils, taken alive, on the nation-wide patriotic TV programs featuring the good, as well as the bad, Americans. The good brought forward, like a painless extraction, to smile at the world through all-American bridgework and speak with the filtered, uncontaminated voice of America."

This sort of fatuous irony, the self-protective rictus of the sophisticate about to dissolve into tears, *is* Mr. Morris's novel: juxtapositions as insultingly simple-minded as the crudities they deride, fashionable bad jokes, wry knowing allusions to events, books, and people we liberal intellectuals—you, I, and the author—all have the same ideas about. The 'twenties include—they are named,

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[1]THE HUGE SEASON, by *Wright Morris.* Viking. $3.75. MOST LIKELY TO SUCCEED, by *John Dos Passos.* Prentice-Hall. $3.50. A SPY IN THE HOUSE OF LOVE, by *Anaïs Nin.* British Book Centre. $3.00. THE GO-BETWEEN, by *L. P. Hartley.* Alfred A. Knopf. $3.50. MUSEUM PIECES, by *William Plomer.* Noonday Press. $3.50. SIDESTREET, by *Robert O. Bowen.* Alfred A. Knopf. $3.00. THE FIVE SEASONS, by *Karl Eska.* Viking. $3.95. THE RAMAYANA, by *Aubrey Menen.* Scribners. $3.50. PHILOSOPHER OR DOG? by *Machado de Assis.* Noonday Press. $3.50.

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and we bow our heads—Guy Lombardo and Wayne King; silent movies and the glowworm hopping from word to word of "Yessir, That's My Baby" flashed on the screen; Lindbergh and Babe Ruth; Paris and Montana Lou Baker (Lady Brett declassed to a collection of sorority-girl escapades and witless wisecracks); Lawrence, the poker-faced tennis-player, who proves his cosmic uniqueness by coming from 0-6, 0-5 to win a college match (described in apocalyptic sports-column prose) and who eventually, disenchanted with everything except bull-fighting and the moment of truth, achieves "a very lovely cornada" and suicide (in 1929). The stinking 'fifties, however, have nothing to offer but Wheaties, academic jobs, Kinsey *vs.* Hemingway ("The sun was still rising, or not rising, but it would not stand still. Coitus interruptus now continuous, the sex life of male, the female, the gall wasp, given the green light, the VD smear . . ."), New York bus drivers, publishers who begrudge the use of their men's rooms to unproductive writers, and—yes, the villain of the novel—the Senator from Wisconsin himself: "The single shot that killed Lawrence had crippled all of them. That shot had been fired on a warm spring morning, like the one Foley could see from his bathroom window. . . . Twenty-four hours later Lawrence was dead, and almost twenty-three years later, to the day, one J. Lasky Proctor was [before The Senator, of course] burning at the stake."

The Huge Season is a genuine coterie-novel, depending boldly on the reader's total sympathy with the author's opinions and associations (Are you liberal? literary? dissatisfied with the world of today? Do you have friends who give moderately wild parties? Are you getting old? Do you hate McCarthy? Then you will just love this book!). It has a certain narrow technical competence, enough to lull the reader for whom it is intended. Otherwise, it is a monument of bad taste: a barbarous attempt to rewrite other men's books, an accumulation of bogus-ironic details hankering after gloomy significance, a parody and tomb of nostalgia.

The 'twenties sum up something peculiarly and nostalgically American for John Dos Passos too. In *U. S. A.*, he presented them through an often melodramatic hyper-adjectival, sometimes convincingly intense, impressionistic medium as random collisions of energies inside a "system" with no room for persons. Since *U. S. A.*, however, Dos Passos has suffered a change of heart regarding the identity of the villains. In *Most Likely to Succeed,* the wheel has come full circle, and the guilt falls now on the energies themselves: specifically, the New York art-theater people of the 'twenties, who (by his account) wrote asinine radical plays and then sold out, with asinine rationalization in the name of the proletariat, simultaneously to Hollywood and The Party. One gathers from some reviews of the book that Dos Passos' former colleagues in the art-theater world deplore what they regard as *his* sellout, as if by subverting the workers'-dawn art-groups he is spitting on the bones of his ancestors (such

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critics would doubtless prefer Mr. Morris's cosier view of the 'twenties). Still, the novel is very poor and very depressing, not because the author is supporting or attacking anything, but because his convictions—whatever they are—no longer give energy and point to what has become an oddly queasy and trivial observation of the particular:

> "Seen any crafties since you got back?" Eli asked with his mouth full of ryebread and liverpaste.
>
> "Why no," said Jed. He felt the muscles of his face stiffen. His hands were cold. There was a quaking in his chest. "Been working on my play."
>
> "Damn good thing." Eli took a swig of beer and wiped the foam off his thick lips with the back of his hand.

Dos Passos, at least, parodies nobody but himself, and he never attempts anything so modish as Mr. Morris's portentous ballooning symbolisms. His movie executives are good for a few laughs (" 'Now you are a scholar,' " says the top man to the writer-"hero"; " 'I have a little problem to discuss. I've just read a book.' "); and Jed's father earns a minor pathos in his dignified paranoiac war against Wall Street:

> "In this room is the evidence—the correspondence, the clippings, the financial statements, the obscure monographs—the evidence which will convict the House of Morgan before the bar of history."

Otherwise, the characters are as tedious and unmotivated as their dialogue. Even if Dos Passos is making an effort to reflect America (or just one corner of Bohemia: it's hard to tell which, since his nausea is so diffused) as a field of banalities flowering in the excitement of the 'twenties and grown seedy soon after, the banalities he singles out are too obviously pre-cut and pressed flat in this vengeful memory-book—surely the $1500-a-week Hollywood literary wage-slaves, for example, were slicker than Dos Passos cares to remember—and the characters he seems to consider his "good" ones are even more embarrassingly banal:

> "Jed you ought to travel around this damn country! Talk to people. Get all this hatred out of your system. . . ."

Dos Passos himself tried that, and it didn't work.

A Spy in the House of Love, on the other hand, is a touchingly battered innocent survival of the 'twenties, and great fun. Here is a representative passage from the end of one chapter and the beginning of the next:

> The trembling premonitions shaking the hand, the body, made dancing unbearable, waiting unbearable, smoking and talking unbearable, soon would come the untamable seizure of sensual cannibalism, the joyous epilepsies.

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> They fled from the eyes of the world, the singer's prophetic, harsh, ovarian prologues. Down the rusty bars of ladders to the undergrounds of night propitious to the first man and woman at the beginning of the world, where there were no words by which to possess each other, no music for serenades, no presents to court with, no tournaments to impress and force a yielding, no secondary instruments, no adornments, necklaces, crowns to subdue, but only one ritual, a joyous, joyous, joyous, joyous impaling of woman on man's sensual mast.
>
> * * *
>
> She reopened her eyes to find herself lying at the bottom of a sail boat, lying over Philip's coat gallantly protecting her from sediments, water seepage and barnacles. Philip lies beside her, only his head is above hers, and his feet extend further down than hers. He lies asleep, content, breathing very deeply. She sits up in the moonlight, angry, restless, defeated. The fever had reached its peak, and waned separately from her desire, leaving it unfulfilled, stranded. High fever and no climax,—Anger, Anger—at this core which will not melt, while Sabina wills to be like man, free to possess and desire in adventure, to enjoy a stranger.

Sabina is just a girl in search of an ideal mate; and—shadowed by a lie detector—she tries out five different men, one of them her husband, a quiet gentle fellow who never seems to worry about his wife's frequent week-at-a-time absences (he thinks she's an actress on tour), and on her reappearances "never understood her eagerness to take a bath, her immediate need to change her clothes, to wash off the old make up." Then there is Philip, the movie-idol type, who strolls the beach singing an aria from *Tristan*, and who complains that "Women are so offended if you are not always ready and in the mood to play the romantic lover, when you look the part." There is a jazz drummer ("Drum—drum—drum—drum—drum—upon her heart, she was a drum, her skin was taut under his hands, and the drumming vibrated through the rest of her body. Wherever he rested his eyes, she felt the drumming of his fingers upon her stomach, her breasts, her hips"); and though he lives on the same street as E. E. Cummings and Djuna Barnes, though he combines with Sabina in "caresses . . . acutely marvellous, like all the multicolored flames from an artful fireworks, bursts of exploded suns and neons within the body, flying comets aimed at all the centers of delight, shooting stars of piercing joys", he won't do. There is John, the war-vet aviator who broods, whom "she wanted to rescue . . . from a distortion she knew led to madness. She wanted to prove to him that his guilt was a distortion, that his vision of her and desire as bad, and of his hunger as bad, was a sickness." Having achieved in his vicinity "a long, prolonged, deep thrusting ecstasy", she nevertheless can't save him from himself. Finally, there is Donald, the slinky mother-seeking pansy who, "touching her naked foot . . . had felt a unity resembling the first unity of the

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world, unity with nature, unity with the mother, early memories of an existence within the silk, warmth and effortlessness of a vast love"; but he doesn't work out either.

It would be unfair to imply that Miss Nin is incapable of straightforward inanities. The dialogue, for example, is out of *John's Other Wife;* descriptions of characters are breathtakingly trite; and—most touching throwback of all—Debussy and early Stravinsky flow from aphrodisiacal phonographs over lovers on studio couches in the Village, just as though nothing has changed since Coolidge. Sabina ultimately undergoes a night-club psychoanalysis by Djuna ("You probably see . . . [your] guilt mirrored in every policeman, every judge, every parent, every personage with authority"), and completes the treatment by listening, at Djuna's studio, to a Beethoven quartet, unspecified, which "began to tell Sabina as Djuna could not, of what they both knew for an absolute certainty: the continuity of existence and of the chain of summits, of elevations by which such continuity is reached." She weeps, and the benignant lie detector closes the book saying: "In homeopathy there is a remedy called pulsatile for those who weep at music." From the dust jacket, we learn that Mr. Edmund Wilson has called Miss Nin "a very great artist, who feels things we cannot feel," and that a collection of her short stories "is on the required reading list at Columbia University."

The English have their own nostalgias. *The Go-Between* incorporates two of them, the last days of Victorianism (Britain as the placid center of the universe) and primary-school adolescence; and both are carefully exploited in the very careful plot. An old man, happening on his "Diary for the year 1900", recalls bit by bit, shuttling between his recollected and his present feelings about them, the events of his thirteenth summer. Leo Colston, fresh from a triumph over his schoolmate tormentors by means of a personally constructed system of black magic, is invited to spend part of the summer with the family of a school friend. Leaving his mother, a genteel poor widow, he is introduced delightedly to the rituals of an apparently serene quasi-aristocratic high life, succumbs almost at once to puppy-love for his schoolmate's beautiful sister, serves as Marian's innocent messenger to both her farmer-lover and her viscount-fiancé, scores two dizzying lover's triumphs of his own before her as the hero of a cricket-match and of the singing celebration afterward, and, in the traumatic climax of the novel, is pulled up by Marian's mother from his birthday party out through a summer downpour to discover and judge the leveling force of passion. In the epilogue, a half-century later, Colston visits Marian and meets a garrulous old woman with a canting cliché-ridden memory: "You know that Ted and I were lovers; well, we were. But we weren't ordinary lovers, not lovers in the vulgar sense, not in the way people make love today. Our love was a beautiful thing, wasn't it? . . . We were made for each other. . . ."

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V. S. Pritchett has described *The Go-Between* as "a novel of power, conviction and suspense managed by an admirable and ingenious story-teller and psychologist"; and it is possible to agree, partially, on every point without feeling that the novel comes off. The important word is "ingenious". Mr. Hartley's book is a remarkable piece of literary carpentry: its plot is not a self-contained action, a beginning and an end of wills and motives (though Mr. Hartley is a practiced enough novelist to work at making it appear so), but a conscious imposition of almost every possible external pattern and order—climatic, magical, anthropological, vegetable, animal, mechanical, historical, psychoanalytic—upon rather thin and statically conceived events and characters. They don't stand up (no events or characters could) under such a weight. By the time the author has finished planting symbols, assuring prodigious coincidences, and insisting on irrevocabilities, we are likely to forget the frequent evocativeness of his descriptive prose, the persuasiveness of such a character as Marian, adorably un-Victorian yet not quite likable, the well managed (if, again, primarily ingenious) suspense up to the dénouement.

Nature and events conspire too willingly with the author. Leo spares a sinisterly beautiful deadly nightshade growing by the very shed in which (as he later discovers) Marian and her farmer make love, but tears it up by the roots the night before the lovers are caught. It is fantastically hot all summer: the heat is a constant topic, it is noted to the very degree on Mr. Maudsley's thermometer, it is explicitly—for the reader who has to be nudged—identified with passion ("I was in love with the heat"; "the sun caught me in its fierce embrace"; "The heat had knocked out Mrs. Maudsley—the heat and Marian. Perhaps Marian *was* the heat?"). On Leo's thirteenth birthday (his day of initiation, no doubt), the heat conveniently vanishes in a chilling thunderstorm and so does all illusion in the moment of discovery. Nor does Mr. Hartley help when, having been comparatively discreet in his imagery till then, he boldly anatomizes Leo's bicycle, the gift Marian was to have ridden into his party, as the boy is supposed to see it while being dragged out of the house toward the lovers: "The handlebars, turned toward me, were dwarfed by the great height of the saddle, which, pulled out to its fullest extent for Marian to ride, disclosed a shining tube of steel six inches long." This sort of Ninian low comedy is exceptional; but the forcing of symbolism is everywhere. Finally, the persistently nerveless invertebrate tone of the narrator (implicitly the result of fifty years of elegiac frigidity after his single trauma: he became "a foreigner in the world of the emotions") is very British, at least monotonous, and possibly exasperating.

Museum Pieces reserves its nostalgia for a pair of Edwardians, who survive into the 'twenties and almost through World War II: Toby d'Arfey, life's last dilettante, born with every talent and grace except a sense of the expedient; and his mother, Mrs. Mountfaucon, an endearing, determinedly unpossessive

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lady who sees her possessions—the teapot from which Alexander Pope was served and the chair he sat in, Dr. Johnson's watch, a Rembrandt, her house and income, her charming bossy son—sacrificed, in the alteration of the world, to the stock-market crash, the family lawyer's peculations, and war. Mr. Plomer has minor difficulties with his point of view: Jane Valance, who comes to know mother and son while engaged to catalogue the family papers, tells the whole story as a sensible and observant, an altogether creditable first person; but the author somewhat impairs Jane's creditableness (and his own) by soliciting more sympathy with her merely catty British acerbities (toward, for example, Americans, Negroes, Jews, and Paris Bohemians), as well as with her occasional recruiting-poster allusions to the late war, than many readers will be willing to give. In her crucial function, however,—looking at or thinking about Toby and his mother—Jane is our ideal, level-headed spectator and gossip. What she tells us about them makes a quiet, surprising novel: nostalgia plucked out of the air and materialized.

The affection between Toby and his mother is the unobtrusive center of the book. It sustains them in an almost symbiotic relationship, yet never inhibits (or is allowed, simple-mindedly, to account for) Toby's restless wanderings and attachments. Without evading untidy motives, it resists Freudian or any other pigeonholing. The anecdotes that teach us about it are sometimes rather grisly, often darkened by the terrible dependence of the old on the young, and, since Mrs. Mountfaucon is bravely bucking the odds to moralize her son's energetic nihilism, almost always comic:

> ". . . Poor Toby, he was dreadfully jealous of his stepfather. Once at Marsh, when Morven—my husband—had dined a little too well (his heart was not very strong, you know, I always thought he must have strained it when rowing at Eton as a boy) he fell down in the drawing-room, with his head almost in the fire! I shrieked and rushed to rescue him, but Toby cried, 'For God's sake, mother, leave him! Let him burn!' "
>
> She hid her face in her hands, and her shoulders quivered. I took out my handkerchief to dry her tears, but when she took her hands away I saw that she was laughing.
>
> "Of course he didn't really mean it. I'm *sure* he would have helped me if it had been really necessary. I know he hates the smell of anything burning" (she said this quite gravely) "and he has an *unerring* way of doing the right thing in a real emergency, however naughty he may be over little things."

Mr. Plomer's mosaic of acute anecdotes and observations is the history of these not quite stubborn enough anachronisms. Toby, who never learns to do the little things well, overcomes his futile versatility and charm to run through career after career, as painter, playwright, novelist, milliner, his life "a series of abandoned experiments", until—ill and an impossible financial burden on his

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mother—he has nothing trivial left except, after one unsuccessful attempt, suicide. Mrs. Mountfaucon dies soon after, and "Her executor told me that in her will she left all sorts of treasures to a variety of persons, but nearly all of these bequests were phantoms; the things had long since been sold, destroyed, given away, stolen, or lost." Mr. Plomer, never imposing nostalgia, allows us to arrive at one of its forms.

What persuades the writer that he has a novel in him? Often, apparently, not a story or situation at all, not even a theme, but an impulse on the lookout for "material"; sometimes, an impulse less promising than nostalgia. Mr. Bowen, in *Sidestreet*, tries pure hatred: toward his protagonist, a monomaniacally self-righteous housewife, who succeeds eventually in murdering her husband without legal retribution and bringing up her son to become a certified sexual psychopath. At the end, she "breathed an audible prayer of thanks that God had kept her on this peaceful street and given her such reward for her long years of restraint from the cheap and giddy pleasures of city life, for her purity from sin, her steadfastness in virtue, her unaltered clear vision of the vice of a male world." The novel is a clinical shorthand of cause-and-effect: nasty-minded, possessive mother produces impotent, psychotic son; war (no details, just war) toughens and enlightens a man; no web of circumstances necessary. There is very little direct presentation, almost nothing but an enraged summary of lives we might be interested in if we had any substantiating evidence. *Sidestreet* is the prospectus of an unattempted novel.

Sometimes, especially in an age as consciously political as ours, a reporter is persuaded to work up a novel out of what should have been left as a report: fiction is assumed to confer more prestige (and to be more readily publishable as a book) than journalism. *The Five Seasons* is, skeletally, an informative account of "daily living in the little-known Turkmen Republic" of Soviet Central Asia, by a man who spent several years in exile there. Mr. Eska manages to suggest, at moments, the hallucinated edginess of a place where all things are botched and everything is somebody's responsibility; but the novel is too long, too obviously a padded recollection, and it is populated by characters indistinguishable from one another except as good, bad, and good-becoming-bad.

At least Aubrey Menen has a good story to start with, not the Hindu epic whose title and cast he makes use of, but *Candide:* the innocent setting out to discover truth and discovering in the course of his adventures the inexhaustible malice, pretension, self-interest, and stupidity of the world. There is a kind of horror in *Candide* that Mr. Menen doesn't attempt to reproduce: the Voltairean death's-head grin that vindicates itself through an exterminator's-eye view of unending butcheries, mutilations, and cataclysms. Mr. Menen does borrow from his master, besides the plot, the fixed idea that all human institutions exist merely to sanctify crime and folly, and the headlong Voltairean pace

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—transitionless leaps from one brief episode to the next, illustrating not character but as many types of human unpleasantness as possible.

Mr. Menen has a skeptic's wit as well as a somewhat emollient geniality, and much of *The Ramayana* is a vivacious text in justification of its concluding epigram: "There are three things which are real: God, human folly, and laughter. Since the first two pass our comprehension, we must do what we can with the third." Satiric wit—like any other kind—is, however, difficult to sustain; and Mr. Menen's flags rather often into schoolboy irreverence:

> . . . after titanic studies he was satisfied that a thorough knowledge of the past could lead a profound scholar to predict the future course of history with great accuracy, provided that it did not turn out quite differently. He became, in a word, well educated.

Even this hurling of blackboard erasers, however, is preferable to his occasional strained efforts—breaking both the pace and the tone of the satire—to fill out scenes and characters. Everybody—including Mr. Menen, now and then—yearns to write an honest-to-goodness *serious* novel.

Machado de Assis is aware of Voltaire (and Flaubert, too); but *Philosopher or Dog?* has a story of its own and makes its own sardonic point. It begins with a Voltairean figure, a philosopher with delusions of knowledge:

> ". . . Listen ignoramus. I am Saint Augustine. I found it out day before yesterday. Listen and say nothing. . . ."

"Saint Augustine", whose mundane name is Quincas Borba, dies ("His last word was that pain is an illusion, and that Pangloss was not so stupid as Voltaire made him out. . .") and bequeaths to his disciple, Rubião, his very considerable fortune, his dog, also named Quincas Borba, and his philosophy:

> ". . . Believe me, Humanitism is the apogee of all things, and I, who formulated it, am the greatest man on earth. . . . Humanity is the principle. In all things there is a certain hidden and identical substance, a principle, unique, universal, eternal, common, indivisible and indestructible . . . that substance . . . is what Humanity is. I call it that because it sums up the universe and the universe is man. . . . There is no death. The encounter of two expansions, or the expansion of two forms may determine the suppression of one of them; but actually, there is no death . . . the destruction does not reach the universal and common principle. Hence, the preservative and beneficent nature of war. Suppose the existence of a potato field and two famished tribes. There are not enough potatoes to feed both tribes. . . . One of the tribes exterminates the other and collects the spoils. To the vanquished, hatred or compassion; to the victor, the potatoes."

Borba's metaphysical claim and his imperial motto are the ironic underpinnings of the novel. The universe aims at the glorification of man; and

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Machado demonstrates, during the minutely observed situations in which his characters attempt to realize themselves, that man, barely capable of asserting his existence, at least has a craving for glory and calls the romantic stars to witness:

> She was right, they ought to separate; he would only ask one thing of her; no, two things. The first was that she should never forget that sublime ten minutes and the second that she should look at the Southern Cross every night. He would look at it, too, and their thoughts would join there in intimacy between God and men.

Rubião, heir of Humanity and the most average of sensual men, goes to the big city (in this instance, 19th-century Rio de Janeiro) to have a big time, and instead keeps falling short of glory. His blundering initiation makes a superb novel of *parvenu* manners, all the more lethal for its testimony to the irrelevance of Iago: there are only vain men and women, calculating ones, good-natured limited ones, harried ones, husbands teased or lethargic, wives merely almost adulterous:

> Palha, who was standing behind her, commented that Carlos Maria waltzed very well. Sophia trembled; she looked at him in the mirror; his face was serene. She agreed that he did not waltz badly.
>
> "No! rather he waltzes very well."
>
> "You praise others because you know that no one can excel you. Come now, my conceited fellow. I know you."
>
> Palha, putting out his hand and grasping her by the chin, compelled her to look at him. Why conceited fellow? Why was he a conceited fellow?
>
> "Ouch!" moaned Sophia, "don't hurt me."
>
> Palha kissed her shoulder-blade, and she smiled. This night she was not weary. She did not have a headache.

Rubião, the provincial schoolteacher, has not been bred up to this degree of refinement: a clumsy man too old to be trained, only the chosen heir of a dead lunatic. Humanity is the principle: he gets titillated by a female showpiece into unfulfillable passion, enriches her prudent husband while steadily impoverishing himself with ventures into journalism and politics, learns the terror of boredom in a city full of "amusements", begins to have conversations with his dog, and gradually, "wearing a pair of gold-embroidered damask slippers on his feet, a cap with a black silk tassel on his head, and bright blue laughter on his lips", becomes the Emperor Napoleon III. Having escaped from the asylum, he manages to make his way back to his village, Quincas Borba at his heels: " 'To the victor, the potatoes!' Rubião shouted to the curious idlers. 'Here I am Emperor! To the victor, the potatoes!' " The philosopher-king has come home, and Machado has elucidated for us—through Rubião's odyssey and at the most imperturbable level of satire—the condition of man.

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VIVIAN MERCIER

A Pyrrhonian Eclogue

WAITING FOR GODOT, by *Samuel Beckett*. Grove Press. $4.75.

His own despair, as Swift proved at least twice—in *A Modest Proposal* and the Fourth Part of *Gulliver's Travels*—can strike an Irishman as hellishly funny. The more serious the subject, the readier the Irish have always been to laugh at it. Down the centuries, their capacity for faith has been rivaled only by their propensity to blasphemy, exemplified in such Gaelic works as *The Vision of Mac Conglinne* in the twelfth century, *The Midnight Court* in the eighteenth, and the ballad versions of the legendary dispute between the hero Oisín (Usheen, Ossian) and St. Patrick, which date from the centuries intervening:

If my son Osgar and God
Wrestled it out on the hill
And I saw Osgar go down
I would say your God fought well.[1]

To accuse *Waiting for Godot* of blasphemy, however, would be to attribute too positive a stand to Samuel Beckett, the latest Irishman to become the darling of Paris. When pious phrases or childhood memories of Scripture drift into the consciousness of his protagonists—a couple of hoboes named Vladimir and Estragon—they usually treat these echoes with bemused reverence. If one utters unconscious blasphemy, at least the other reproves him:

VLADIMIR: But you can't go barefoot!
ESTRAGON: Christ did.
VLADIMIR: Christ! What has Christ got to do with it? You're not going to compare yourself to Christ!
ESTRAGON: All my life I've compared myself to him.
VLADIMIR: But where he lived it was warm, it was dry!
ESTRAGON: Yes. And they crucified quick.
Silence

As we see, the reproof becomes the occasion of a still greater blasphemy, though I believe the author intends his characters to remain unaware that they are blaspheming.

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[1]Frank O'Connor, *The Fountain of Magic* (London, Macmillan, 1939), p. 3. For *The Midnight Court*, by Brian Merriman, see Arland Ussher's translation in *1,000 Years of Irish Poetry*, ed. Kathleen Hoagland (New York, Devin-Adair, 1947), or Frank O'Connor's in *The Midnight Court* (London & Dublin, Fridberg, 1945). For a translation of *The Vision of Mac Conglinne* see Kuno Meyer, *Aislinge Meic Conglinne* (London, David Nutt, 1892).

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The play as a whole radiates the same kind of patient, mocking Pyrrhonism as *Finnegans Wake* or such passages of Kafka as the parable "Before the Law" in *The Trial*. So destructive an atmosphere is apt to melt the fibers of any material, however tough, that becomes exposed to it. Existentialism—or what passes for it on the Paris stage—resists this universal solvent no better than more orthodox philosophies. Compare the curtain line (*Eh bien, continuons.*) of Sartre's *Huis clos (No Exit)* with the lines which identically conclude both acts of Beckett's "tragicomedy":

ESTRAGON: Well, shall we go?
VLADIMIR: Yes, let's go.
They do not move.

Curtain

It seems to me that Sartre's, "Well then, let's get on with it," even though "it" stands for the torment of Hell, contains at least a grain of optimism when compared with Beckett's ending.

If Sartre turned Hell into bedroom farce—or rather, since *Huis clos* is far from funny, turned a bedroom farce into Hell—then Beckett may be said to have turned man's search for God or the Ideal into a vaudeville act. The essential Irish comic gift is not, as has been thought, wit or humor, but merely ridicule. Parody, *reductio ad absurdum*, every type of jeering mimicry, every satirical method that destroys by exaggerated imitation—all these flourish, not only in Irish literature, but in Irish folkways. "Irony" implies too much self-control, too much common sense, to be the appropriate word even for Swift's method. In Gaelic literature there is no ideal so sacred that it escapes eventual burlesque. Gods, heroes, Druids, poets, clergy, landowners, shopkeepers, the common people, are all ridiculed sooner or later.[2]

About the only aspect of life for which Mr. Beckett consistently shows respect is the convention of vaudeville—or rather, of music-hall, which is the British and Irish equivalent. All his four main characters wear derby hats; Vladimir walks with short, stiff strides, legs wide apart; Estragon wears boots that are too tight. Ropes break; pants fall down; hats are exchanged, tried on, jumped on. Practically every bit of the stage business has been borrowed from vaudeville, but fortunately none of the dialogue; still, even that retains the *form* of cross-talk—so much so that Marshall Lee has designed the New York edition in an unusually narrow format to suit the innumerable short speeches.

[2]The following ancient Irish joke has something of the Beckett flavor about it: "Three penitents resolved to quit the world for an ascetic life, and so sought the wilderness. After exactly a year's silence the first one said: ''tis a good life we lead.' At the next year's end the second answered: 'it is so.' Another year being run out, the third exclaimed: 'if I cannot have peace and quiet here I'll go back to the world.'" Standish H. O'Grady, *Silva Gadelica* (London, Williams & Norgate, 1892), II, viii, n. O'Grady—not Yeats's mentor Standish *J.*, but a kinsman—had his idiosyncrasies of scholarship as well as capitalization. He assures us that "The original Irish is in a paper MS in the British Museum, but for the moment I have mislaid the reference."

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Vladimir is, roughly speaking, the straight man of the act, playing a Groucho who lacks Groucho's serenity to the speaking Harpo of Estragon; Vladimir has the anxiety of Hardy without his bulk, while Estragon has the dreaminess of Laurel without his gentleness.

One is tempted to equate Vladimir with Pécuchet and Estragon with Bouvard. To do this would be a mistake, however, for Beckett's pair have never had faith in culture, in science, or in anything else—except, of course, in Godot, who never turns up for his appointment. Once, when Vladimir thinks Godot is coming, he cries out, "We're saved!" but he never makes clear how, or from what, he expects to be saved.

Indeed, everything about Godot is up in the air:

VLADIMIR: He said Saturday. *(Pause.)* I think.
ESTRAGON: You think.
VLADIMIR: I must have made a note of it. *(He fumbles in his pockets, bursting with miscellaneous rubbish.)*
ESTRAGON: *(very insidious)*. But what Saturday? And is it Saturday? Is it not rather Sunday? *(Pause.)* Or Monday? *(Pause.)* Or Friday?
VLADIMIR: *(looking wildly about him, as though the date was inscribed in the landscape)*. It's not possible!
ESTRAGON: Or Thursday?
VLADIMIR: What'll we do?
ESTRAGON: If he came yesterday and we weren't here you may be sure he won't come again to-day.
VLADIMIR: But you say we were here yesterday.
ESTRAGON: I may be mistaken. *(Pause.)* Let's stop talking for a minute, do you mind?

The cast includes three other characters: a landowner named Pozzo, his slave Lucky, and a Boy who fills a very minor role. The setting for the first act is "*A country road. A tree. Evening.*" The second act, which occurs next day at the same time and place, recapitulates the first act with variations. In each act Pozzo arrives driving Lucky by means of a rope passed around his neck. Lucky, who speaks only once, though then at great length, is burdened with a heavy valise, a picnic basket, a folding stool and a greatcoat. Pozzo, who carries a whip, has a great deal to say, some of which seems profound but obscure, the rest utterly banal. In the second act Pozzo has become blind and Lucky dumb; the tree wears a few leaves, Lucky a different hat, Estragon possibly a new pair of boots; but the relations between Pozzo and Lucky, like those between Vladimir and Estragon, remain basically unchanged. At the end of the first act, after Pozzo has gone out, the Boy arrives to say, "Mr. Godot told me to tell you he won't come this evening but surely to-morrow." In the second act Vladimir says substantially the same thing to the Boy, who

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agrees that he has anticipated the message correctly. He adds, in answer to Vladimir's questioning, that Mr. Godot does nothing and has a beard—a white one, he thinks.

After Pozzo's second-act exit, the more intuitive Estragon asks:

> Are you sure it wasn't him?
> VLADIMIR: Who?
> ESTRAGON: Godot.
> VLADIMIR: But who?
> ESTRAGON: Pozzo.
> VLADIMIR: Not at all! *(Less sure.)* Not at all! *(Still less sure.)* Not at all!

Doubtless it is immaterial that Pozzo has no beard and does not call himself Godot. After Pozzo had gone the previous evening, the boy said of Godot, ". . . he won't come this evening but surely to-morrow." Now, Pozzo has done precisely what the boy said Godot would do. In fact, we are given a hint that, if the two hoboes could only remember properly, they would realize that they meet Pozzo every evening. (I hope the reader is still with me.)

Is Godot God, as most readers and members of the audience have thought? I believe so, though the play still makes sense if we take Godot as symbolizing some elusive ideal such as the classless society—or if we avoid making any one-to-one correlation whatever. However, if Pozzo is Godot and Godot is God, we get a Viconian cycle, in which history repeats itself every evening. The Incarnation (or the Second Coming) is constantly re-enacted, always with the same result. Godot is not rejected; he simply passes unrecognized because his attributes are so completely out of harmony with the aspirations of those who wait for him. Erich Heller's interpretation of one episode in *The Castle*—as indeed of Kafka's work as a whole—corresponds very closely with this view of *Waiting for Godot:*

> . . . Bürgel delivers, in a rapturous crescendo, the message of the miracle: if a man takes a secretary of the castle by surprise; if, in the middle of the night, the applicant, almost unconscious of what he does, slips like a tiny grain through a perfect sieve, through the network of difficulties that is spread over all approaches to the centre of authority, then the castle, in the person of this one secretary, must yield to the intruder, indeed must almost force the granting of the request upon the unsuspecting subject. . . . Bürgel goes on with his rhapsody, describing the shattering delight with which a secretary responds to this situation. But when he ends, K. is sound asleep, and, with the conditions of the miracle fulfilled before his eyes, as oblivious of its possibility as he had never been in his tortured wakeful pursuit of it.[3]

[3]Erich Heller, *The Disinherited Mind* (Cambridge, England: Bowes & Bowes, 1952), p. 180.

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Many will feel that Beckett's play constitutes a better paradigm of human existence if we retain all its ambiguities and leave (a) the identity of Pozzo, (b) the identity of Godot, completely in doubt. The facile equation Pozzo *equals* Godot *equals* God leads to some rather pat, village-atheist deductions. For Pozzo is transparently unjust and, since he goes blind, neither omnipotent nor immutable. Yet Lucky, who could easily escape after Pozzo goes blind, remains an abject slave, to the point of putting the end of his rope in Pozzo's hand when the latter drops it. He also continues to carry the valise—which we learn is full of sand—and all the other paraphernalia. Whenever Pozzo trips and falls, Lucky is brought down by the rope. It seems almost too easy to interpret Lucky as the type of the true believer.[4]

Given the right kind of performance, *Waiting for Godot* should be extraordinarily touching and funny on the stage. Moments like that when Vladimir tries to laugh but cannot because of the pain from his hernia (prostate? strangury?) need the miming of a Chaplin or a Barrault to lift them above mere coarseness. One shudders to think of the hash an earnest off-Broadway (or on-Broadway) director could make of most of the play, especially if he had the help of a couple of actors who despised vaudeville. Yet no closet reading is going to satisfy anyone who remembers the old movies, the old "turns" that Mr. Beckett so obviously has never forgotten. Nowhere outside of the theatre can he hope to convince us that "the Absurd" of the Existentialists is also, by Godot, the Funny. And let it be understood that when I write "the Funny" I do *not* mean "the Comic". A great deal of what is written about the Comic nowadays is like Vladimir's hernia: it keeps one from laughing.[5]

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[4]I do have yet another interpretation of Pozzo, which I think is much too facile: Given the Italian pronunciation, his name suggests pots o' money; he would then represent Capital and Lucky, Labor. In the cycle of history a money economy keeps recurring; each time, there is danger that some people will confuse Capital with God; indeed, Pozzo's blindness reminds me that Plutus, the Greek god of wealth, was always represented as blind.

[5]In view of the difficulty of getting authentic biographical information about living authors, it may be well to note that the short biography of Beckett appended to the Grove Press edition is accurate in every detail that I have been able to check—something that cannot be said of the similar material on the dust jacket. I may add that the American edition is illustrated by four photographs of the Paris production, three in the text and one on the jacket, besides a portrait of Mr. Beckett.

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SONYA RUDIKOFF

Freud's Letters[1]

"BRESLAU PLAYS A PART IN MY CHILDHOOD memories. At the age of three I passed through the station when we moved from Freiberg to Leipzig, and the gas jets, which were the first I had seen, reminded me of souls burning in hell."

It is an interesting memory of Freud's, although not one of crucial importance, nor one that revealed to him anything like the nucleus of the Oedipus complex. Here, in 1897, Freud was merely improvising on the theme of Breslau because he planned to meet his good friend, Wilhelm Fliess, there for a few days of scientific talk. But we may stop a moment before this picture of an infant Freud in Breslau marveling at his *first sight of gas jets*. In the Freudian scheme, the age of three is a fairly final developmental stage. To predict that, therefore, the grown-up Freud would be uncomfortable with electric lights is absurdly literal, indeed perverse. I start with this memory only to suggest that the explorer of infantile amnesia found very different memories than we ourselves might find. The year of this proposed Breslau meeting, 1897, can seem rather close to us; by that time, Austrian infants were having their first encounters with electric lights and other modern facts; gas jets could be assumed as part of the natural world. But if we keep in mind only what separates us from 1897, we may miss the sense of this earlier period, the forty years before it when Freud grew up. Freud was 41 years old in 1897, but when he passed through the Breslau station he was three, and the year was 1859: between us and the grown man, perhaps 57 years intervene, but between us and the infant Freud, nearly a century. We need not conclude that Freudian theory is therefore the skeleton of a mastodon preserved in the frigid, early Victorian strata, but a sense of distance can be useful.

This playing with numbers also provides something for the imagination, and perhaps such apparent frivolity is not entirely inappropriate to begin with; for, the man who received these letters, whose replies we do not have, was something of a numerologist himself, and, in fact, it was numbers that figured in his final estrangement from Freud. He was much more than a crazy nose and throat specialist, obsessed by magic numbers, although now some people tend to belittle him, perhaps out of a desire to see this important friendship of Freud's in its most bizarre and perverse aspect. The bold imaginative Dr. Fliess from Berlin was, in those early days, a man of great charm, vanity, and

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[1]THE ORIGINS OF PSYCHO-ANALYSIS. Letters to Wilhelm Fliess, Drafts and Notes: 1887-1902, by *Sigmund Freud*. Edited by *Marie Bonaparte, Anna Freud, Ernst Kris*. Basic Books. $6.75.

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intellectual pretension, who liked to think of himself as a kind of Kepler of biology. He and his good friend in Vienna, Mrs. Freud's "*goldener Sigi*", were interested in neurology; in fact, that was how they first became acquainted, and their correspondence during the years from 1887 to 1902 reflects their common interests as well as the social and other links between them. Dr. Freud has recently been married; Dr. Fliess will marry a Viennese woman whose friends were among Breuer's patients; both men are Jewish, middle-class, and ambitious; Freud wishes to name a child after his Berlin mentor but the child is a girl; Fliess' children interest Freud greatly, and the correspondents exchange fatherly details; their intimacy moves from *Sie* to *du*, and they meet whenever they can for their own private scientific "congresses"; manuscripts pass back and forth through the mails; so do notes, random ideas, projects, reports on patients, dream reports, and number calculations. The two men are scientific as well as personal friends. We have only Freud's side of the correspondence, so we cannot tell what Fliess thought or felt, except by implication; but he wrote to Vienna frequently, visited there, criticized Freud's manuscripts, and discussed his friend's ideas on hysteria and sexuality. His Berlin practice seems more satisfactory than his friend's in Vienna: we get the sense that Freud does all the complaining, but perhaps Fliess complained to others. Fliess may seem to us at this distance like a fashionable doctor with a few *idées fixes*, something like a society obstetrician who makes all his babies Caesareans whether they should be or not, and confirms his own dogmatism by a sparkling theory. Dr. Fliess' ruling ideas concerned the periodicity of human life; he was convinced that the numbers 23 and 28 were of determining significance and that their permutations and combinations could be shown to control all natural events. He was also absorbed in demonstrating the truth of his own idea of the "nasal reflex neurosis", which he found to be the nucleus of numerous far-flung symptoms. He was especially interested in what he thought were significant connections between nasal disturbances and sexual behavior. Although Fliess was two years younger than Freud, the older man revered, admired, and propitiated him for perhaps ten years, quite as if the ultimate sanctions came from Berlin. Their estrangement developed slowly and, for a time, secretly; Freud continued to express awe at his friend's brilliance, even though he tried not to put the period theory to a test, almost as if he knew it would fail to satisfy his demands for a *psychic* explanation of psychic events. The friends disagreed about left-handedness and about Fliess' favorite theory of bisexuality. Finally Freud, his self-analysis already begun, discovers the rootlets of disaffection in his inability to write to Fliess. In 1902 Freud sends the last message, a postcard from Italy, but their true friendship had faded at least two years before.

The correspondence which survives is about one-and-three-quarters times as extensive as the amount published here; and in the text itself there are frequent

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excisions and omissions. If Fliess remains a shadowy figure, if Freud at times seems the victim of a monumental self-regard, and if the shape of the period during which these letters were written seems undefined, we may put it down to the circumstances of publication. The book, however, appears with a scientific rather than a biographical intention, and even if Freud's contribution was to show in what degree biography can be science, we may recall the title: "*The Origins of Psychoanalysis*", and recall also Freud's unwillingness to illuminate his personal life except for science. (Dr. Jones remarks of his own biographical effort that Freud would not have liked it.) Indeed, it is a nice question whether the origins of psychoanalysis really can be shown without more of the day-to-day details of Freud's initial self-analysis, which was to be the model of the system; but it was Freud himself who trained us in this desire for completeness, in this belief in the significance of everyday life. Specialists, however, will be familiar with other material dealing with Freud's own analysis, and in a sense the book is really for them. There is even something rather amusing in the way Drs. Freud, Kris, and Bonaparte insist on regarding the origins of psychoanalysis as wholly scientific, almost defying the man who found it personal at the same time. Freud himself said that self-analysis was really impossible, and many analysts consider his first effort to be incomplete; but we may take it as a sign of an objective scientific existence that psychoanalysis itself is not so closely tied to its first explorer as to crumble under a criticism *ad hominem*. Indeed, that is what makes something like Mr. Hugh Kenner's abusive mockery of Freud (THE HUDSON REVIEW, Summer 1954) so pretentious: he assumes that the entire Freudian theory and practice will be as vulnerable as any of Freud's human failings, and this ignores the very point of a science, which is that laws are not contingent upon the character of the discoverer.

As revealed in these letters, the rudiments of the future psychological theory have a decidedly independent interest: we see Freud's work with hysteria, his investigations into the sexual aetiology of neurosis—at first, in the sense of adults' sexual frustration—his attempts to find a physiological basis for psychological events, his early hypotheses about anxiety and repression; we see the development of a systematic conception of the unconscious, we see the seduction theory relinquished in favor of the more viable hypotheses about fantasy, and out of this we see evolve the hypotheses about infantile sexuality and dreams. Freud found his own analysis "harder than any other", but the connection between it and the development of his hypotheses is fascinating; we are most aware of it as an extrapolation from his own experience with himself, but the letters show us how it was deductive as well: "I can only analyse myself with objectively acquired knowledge (as if I were a stranger)", and elsewhere we read of it as a kind of experiment undertaken to discover general laws of the human psyche. It was always a double process, which is perhaps

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what kept the hypotheses from becoming the rigid ossature of a crackpot theory, because Freud did not blur the distinction between science and his own ego. At times he notes some aspects of the relation, and it is profoundly moving, as when he says of *The Interpretation of Dreams* that "the book was, I found, a portion of my own self-analysis, my reaction to my father's death—that is to say, to the most important event, the most poignant loss, of a man's life."

These developments and elaborations of rudimentary ideas are interesting in themselves, apart from the other interest they provide as the substance of Freud's friendship with Fliess: personal relations were at the same time intellectual history. As soon as Freud begins to understand the dynamic nature of psychic processes, then physiological foundations, number determinism, or concepts of periodic cyclical movement become almost irrelevant, and Fliess represents them all. Freud tries to evade a direct challenge and he even makes a last attempt to revive their old friendship by suggesting that they write a book together on Fliess' favorite subject. But Fliess has accused him of putting thoughts into his patients' heads, the classical accusation, and it shows how far apart they have moved (or *were,* to begin with). Their estrangement and the final rupture of their relations were momentous intellectually as well as personally—Freudian theory could have been rather different. The end of a long intimacy is often dismal and touching, as it was in this case: for Freud it was as if he were losing his only audience—"For whom shall I write now?"—and, although Fliess' own sentiments are not known, we can see that both men were affected by the loss for many years after—Freud began to gather students and disciples in 1902 and the psychoanalytic movement became his audience; Fliess, in the fashion of one betrayed, hurled accusations and saw universal conspiracies to steal his private ideas.

Apart from the scientific interest of these letters and manuscripts, their general cultural interest is very great, particularly in what they suggest about contemporary relations between therapy and culture. I am struck by the relative simplicity of Freud's medical practice; not, of course, that he didn't work hard, but his relation to his patients often seems like that of the old family doctor; he sees his patients socially, he treats his friends, and does all the things which are interdicted for modern analysts. Then, the simplicity appears in other ways: especially in the early letters, when Freud discusses his patients, we sense vaguely and indefinably some of the curious and revolutionary aspects of modern personality. The point is debatable, in how far we are truly different from our ancestors, but only a few details will suffice to show us how much our behavior differs, and how our personal expression takes other forms. Certainly, manners have changed, and under "manners", we might discover the relation of illness to the personality. Frau A. and Herr von F., and the others who found their way to the Berggasse, had their hysteri-

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cal symptoms (a sign that they are not modern), but they had no quarrel with reality, and neither could such a thing be said of their doctor who, if he found life to be financially and even emotionally pressing, nevertheless admired and respected the social world and hoped to fulfill his ambition in it. We need only compare that posture with the more familiar modern one, the stance from which "society is the patient". Dr. Z. and Herr K. had no question about what to do with their lives; they knew exactly what they wanted to do, it was a question of curing a paralysed leg, or a hand-washing compulsion, or impotence; freeing the ego and not, as so often in our own day, creating one. Psychoanalysis had not yet become in those early days the intense philosophical and moral activity which it is for modern patients, who, in the representative instance, often have no symptoms at all but are vaguely unhappy. This in itself makes them quite unlike Frau A. and Doctor Z. who were frequently not unhappy. Of course, we have come to see the absence of symptoms as, *tout court*, a symptom. Frau A. could not *afford* to have such a symptom or she would not go to a doctor with it. In a curious way, we find that the fundamental human consciousness of the burden of life has, in our own time, been translated into the terms of personal discontent, and modern patients need analysis not for the removal of obstructions so much as for a moral education. Matthew Arnold wrote "The Buried Life" four years before Freud was born; scientific excavation of the buried psychic life was to be the great contribution of the Viennese Schliemann, who uncovered the whole civilization of childhood in the dim arcana and the archaic structure of our adult minds. But it is as if our psychic archaeologists finished their labors in the world of pre-history only to find that a modern civilization does not exist.

It would be a difficult task indeed to give an adequate account of these changes, and particularly to decide how much personality actually *was* different fifty and more years ago, and how much the present concern with the integrity of personality may simply reflect the more complex development of the psychoanalytic ego psychology. After all, Freud created his own clientele, not only in the sense that there can be no neuroses without analysts, or because the success of a therapy widens its use, but, more significantly, because the insights which at first challenge culture subsequently effect changes in it, and one of the striking changes is evident in the fresh irrelevance of the initial challenge: if we change our feeling about sexuality and child-rearing, for example, then the same consequences of repression may not arise; but other consequences may take their place; it may be that we have been trained by Freud to allow more "acting out" at every age, but especially in childhood. Then, as an example of a changed view about repression, there is the modern feeling that what is repressed may be the *best* part of ourselves and that the aim of a therapy is to liberate *this*, an aim very different from Freud's ideal of rational control and sublimation, but very interesting as an indication of the

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shift. Such changes are reflected in modern conduct and, in turn, they provide the explanations when that conduct breaks down. The fact alluded to above is portentous in itself—that psychoanalytic ideas no longer only act upon culture but have become an authoritative part of it, especially in this country. The general awareness of psychological ideas precludes the *simplicity* of developing hysterical symptoms or in fact of confining the disease at all. Nowadays, analysis is often the only intellectual life some people have, and no other discipline contends for their minds; nothing else seems able to teach the truth of feeling or the sense of sensibility. Although it is modish to speak of psychoanalysis as a religion—and to adduce the "priests", purification by analysis, and the "trinity" of ego, id, and super-ego—the metaphor is really imprecise and no more than a piece of *chic* except in one sense: we cannot fail to notice that the kind of emotion which formerly might have been aroused by problems of belief is today tapped by problems of the ego's survival. Moments of conversion, realization and changes in conduct are conceived of in the terms of a psychological vocabulary. What was once the province of religion now becomes the substance of a personal therapy; indeed, it was also the province of philosophy, of art, of the vocation, of all the ideals of transcendence which contended for a chance to educate the sensibility; but today the textbook used is made up of one's own *graffiti*, of little use to future scholars.

We would patronize the past and put ourselves in a false position if we did not see that the problem of the ego's survival is truly modern and actual. Culture sets up a deafening roar, and we are trained to listen to the sound of every voice but our own. In this country especially, for reasons which are familiar to everyone, the problem of personal integrity is more crucial than it is in certain older European countries, and perhaps is more desperate than it has ever been. If we all watch the ego's survival anxiously and uncomfortably, it is because the end is uncertain; the problem is a very real one, not just a sign of modern inadequacy. Faith in the survival of one's own self is not supported by any data available to us and it is, in fact, assailed from all sides. Choice is more difficult, if only because there is more to choose and less certainty than ever of approaching the reality—*and the realization*—of choice: what makes choice real is its connection with possibility, and we can hardly exaggerate the degree to which that connection has atrophied. If we reflect on the difference between Freud and his patients, we can see that in a certain sense, there was no difference at all; Freud was his own first patient. But the difference between Freud and ourselves is likely to be enormous, and this brings me to what might be called the moral interest of his letters. In any discussion of the questions I have raised there is always the danger of patronizing simplicity; the chimerical ego can be disdained for the simpler libido, and the sturdiness, the clarity which some older forms of personality exhibit are often flattered beyond their true value. Freud's letters, however, can recall us to the integrity

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of which any personality is capable in a life of great commitment. Many people still have not recovered from their horror at T. S. Eliot's fear that personality may become a thing of alarming importance; his ideas about the forgetting of personality continue to appear shocking, and the force of our reaction to this comes from the very awareness Freud confirmed: once self-abnegation could be shown as hypocrisy, then only the ego openly playing itself could be free of the suspicion of self-interest. The sacrifice of personality becomes for us a doctrine of sickness and suffering only, and we have perhaps become unused to seeing how it may be a doctrine of liberation. In spite of the modern love of paradox, *this* paradox has lost its hold on the imagination. But we can see that a transcendent idea has great virtue in that it requires commitment and rewards dedication—whether it is the transcendence of scientific truth, or of art, or of the vocation, or the religious transcendence in which our own age is not really comfortable. Just as the soul was said to be found only in being lost, so perhaps with the personality; at any rate, it can hardly be found if one sets out to invent or look for it. Freud's self-analysis, for example, was a function of his work, and even at its most personal its intention was truth. Only by accident, as it were, was the personality involved.

Considerations of this sort would make Mr. Kenner's criticism (to which I've referred earlier) repellent if it were not essentially irrelevant. To speak of Freud's ideas as so "period", as made out of the "flotsam" of "Mittel-Europa", and to point out how much they "date", as if they were a collection of Cecil Beaton photographs—this is frivolity. Such a sense of the past is worse than none at all. To attack and "date" Freud's philosophical assumptions is about as original as finding coals in Newcastle; equally, to show how Freud was a child of his age is nothing more than what Freud himself did. Indeed, Freud observed that it was his fate to discover the obvious—"that children have sexual feelings, which every nursemaid knows; and that night dreams are just as much a wish-fulfillment as day dreams." In point of fact, it is inevitably Freud's antagonists who, initially, claim more for their enemy than he himself would have claimed, although they end by denuding him entirely. According to Mr. Kenner's judgment, Freud—something of a knave but more of a fool—perpetrated a vast hoax on modern society and conspired to destroy human life in order to deify the "monotonous Id". His nefarious efforts would have failed, had it not been for the Bloomsbury circle and the British avant-garde of the Twenties and Thirties who,—all arrant knaves running a great publicity machine—were so powerful that they convinced the fools, ensnared the dupes like Dr. Ernest Jones, and cowed almost the entire civilized world. This is all very sad and familiar and humorless, this footprint of history. . . .

And, *pace* Mr. Kenner, the jokes in *Wit and its Relation to the Unconscious* are quite funny indeed.

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RICHMOND LATTIMORE

Parnassus is a Rugged Mountain

THE FABLES OF LA FONTAINE, translated by *Marianne Moore*. Viking Press. $5.00.

THE FIRST AND LASTING IMPRESSION is of an enormous job impressively done. It would not have been too hard for a good poet to reproduce the meaning of the French in any form or forms of English verse which might happen to please her. But what Miss Moore has done is to recreate in English the whole metrical scheme, that is line length and placing of rhymes, in each Fable. This tour de force was not accomplished without some sacrifice of literal meaning to formal literalness. That is as it should be. Even though not all the Fables are as simple as some of those simpler ones on which we cut our teeth, not many of those into whose hands this book will fall are in need of a pony for the meaning of the original; as they would be if Miss Moore were translating Anglo-Saxon, Persian, or Sanskrit, or even Greek or Latin.

It is true also that in style and texture the English differs from the French more than the difference between the languages demands. Both poets are distinguished for wit and radiant good humor. But where La Fontaine, however terse and sharp, remains limpid, almost bland, Miss Moore brings into the Fables her own syntax and diction, characteristically abrupt, tough-grained, almost thorny (occasionally just obscure).

Or so I find, and in it all I find mostly merit. Where La Fontaine is content with (x. 1)

Un homme vit une couleuvre

Miss Moore has allowed herself

The man had seen the coil move.

French is flat, English dramatic. (Is English unnecessarily dramatic? Does French start the story with less distraction?). For (xii. 12)

l'animal. . . .
Sauvage encore et tout grossier

we find

The savage-eyed, big-shouldered bird of prey.

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This line bristles as La Fontaine's, with *grossier* as arch-word, could not, a line La Fontaine could not have written or wanted to write, but a grand line. Sometimes, I have to admit, Miss Moore is too obscure. I simply could not understand her version of ix. 13 until I went back to the French, which was easy enough. Compare again (v. 18)

L'aigle et le chat-huant leurs querelles cessèrent,
Et firent tant qu'ils s'embrassèrent.
L'un jura foi de roi, l'autre foi de hibou,
Qu'ils ne se goberoient leurs petits peu ni prou.
Connoissez-vous les miens? dit l'oiseau de Minerve.
—Non, dit l'aigle.—Tant pis! reprit le triste oiseau.

with

An eagle and an owl, by birth a hostile pair,
Embraced and swore to forbear;
By kings' faith and owls' faith each declared his oath true;
Neither would wage on nestlings, war which either need rue.
"How recognize mine as mine," Minerva's bird besought.
—"I might not," the other said.—"A mortal blow,"
The owl mourned.

The first three lines are good in English, but the next three are not adequate. Whose nestlings? The eagle simply said "no", and "a mortal blow" is far too oblique for "tant pis". I wish, too, that Miss Moore had used (throughout) capitals to begin lines only where punctuation demanded it; that would have saved some unnecessary jogs and hitches in the reading, and surely initial capitalization of lines is a convention suitable to eighteenth-century couplets, not to modern verse, and certainly not to a versification so full of cross-over and structural surprise. Such difficulty as I complain of here is of an austerely honorable sort. There is a little bad writing, too. In vii. 4

A gudgeon! The sort of thing heron would detain

the inversion makes translationese. Occasionally, rarely, the metre is off, gallops (beginning of xii. 16) or halts (beginning of xii. 9). I come on what seem like spells of weariness, and in a period of devotion so long and so hard, there must have been doldrums, when the task semed endless and the reward inadequate.

But the reward is adequate after all, the faults had to be mentioned but are few, the first impression remains right. This is more than a tour de force, it is La Fontaine living again in another language and new poetry. In the lines that follow, it is to the form that we owe the magic, and to the scheme and plan of the translator that we owe the form (ix. 2):

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Fond lovers, since love is all in all, if you go away,
Come hastening home again:
Each a beautiful world to the other of the two,
Forever strange, forever new.
Love the world in each of you, unaware of all the rest.

Or, if this was too mellow for either poet's usual vein, let us end with something more characteristic of both, where (vii. 10), as she counted the profit to come from her milk for market,

Perrette skipped for joy as she dreamt of what she'd bought.
The crock crashed. Farewell, cow, calf, fat pig, eggs not hatched out.
The mistress of wealth grieved to forfeit forever
The profits that were mounting.
How ask her husband to forgive her
Lest he beat her as was fitting?
And thus ended the farce we have watched:
Don't count your chickens before they are hatched.

Whom does a daydream not entrance?
Have castles in air no romance?
Picrochole, Pyrrhus, Perrette—a fool's or wisdom's mirth—
Every hearth can give them birth.

What more could anyone ask?

COMMUNICATIONS

Dears Sirs,

In reply to Dr. Leavis's communication in your last issue, I feel that I owe him a small apology and myself a small reprimand—I cannot affect to believe that large ones are required—for a looseness of phrasing which may have made it appear, which clearly did make it appear to Dr. Leavis, that I had said a good deal more than I meant and that what I had said of *Scrutiny* the periodical was intended for Leavis the individual. I must confess, though, that I cannot see much excuse for such misconceptions. The remark of which he complains—"Early issues (before the war) show a certain flirting with the Marxism then current"—was immediately followed by this: ". . . but that went soon. Later ones *reject with equal decision* various efforts to annex literary criticism to Christian theology"—in which the phrase italicized surely contains the clear implication that the "flirting" also was decisively rejected. And this was

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followed by a sentence—"Leavis has stayed disengaged, consistently, through an epoch peculiarly hostile to disengagement"—which again, I should have thought, carried within it the very plain corollary that he, as an individual, was not thought of as involved in whatever degree of "engagement" had been attributed, rightly or wrongly, to the journal. There remains, then, for us to dispute about, only the suggestion, thus heavily qualified, that *Scrutiny* at the beginning showed some signs of sympathy "with the Marxism then current". (May I say that I, unlike Dr. Leavis, to judge from the tone of his communication, do not regard this as a crime?) Chapter and verse is the only satisfactory way of supporting such a suggestion; here, then, is a selection of quotations from early issues of *Scrutiny*:—

> Though in the United States business has subverted religion, the religious attitudes are still useful to business, which canalizes them for its own purposes. (Vol. I, no. 3: p. 243.)
>
> . . . With the result that over Russia he exhibits all the hysteria of the invalid or of the unforgivably insulted; to discover that your coachman has not only thought of your schemes already, but is putting them into practice with a thoroughness and attention to detail of which you are incapable, must be galling, but Mr. Churchill might make some pretence at rationalizing this annoyance. He appears to know no more about communism than our left boot. (Vol. I, no. 4: p. 412. This is from a review by W. H. Auden, who had reviews in four issues of the first two volumes.)
>
> Still, Mr. Dawson hazarded the statement that 'as a working system' American capitalism 'is infinitely more successful than the Russian experiment'—it is no excuse that this was written in 1931—and he appears to be committed to the Spanish monarchy as well as to the British Empire. (Vol. II, no. 1: p. 99.)
>
> Admirable as his purpose is in stressing the truth that Dialectical Materialism grows naturally out of the evolving theory of knowledge . . . it fails utterly if he does not sufficiently recognize that the final step from Hegel to Marx involves *discontinuity* and precisely one of those 'leaps' which revolutionary philosophy and the science of biology claim to be characteristic of life. (Vol. II, no. 2: p. 213.)
>
> His (Baden Powell's) Scout movement is not a military movement but, though I do not for a moment suggest that he consciously intended it to be, it is a class weapon. (Vol. II, no. 4: p. 408.)
>
> Marc Slonim, who wrote the introduction and compiled the section of the anthology devoted to Literary Criticism, is an active political emigre —that is to say an enemy of Soviet Russia. . . . Being as he is an enemy of the Soviet Union and of Communism, it is natural that he should

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> have tried to distort the facts and to present them in a way as hostile as possible. (Vol. III, no. 2: p. 197.)
>
> It (a leading British newspaper) is obviously a Government mouthpiece, perhaps with a more intimate connection than we are allowed to know. Information like that published in the *Week* (No. 77) is not often available—it was alleged that the Vickers agent and the ——— correspondent at Bucharest were one and the same person. Nor is the list of directors reassuring. Besides seven individual directors, there are seven other directories held by twenty-three assorted banks, assurance companies, railways, etc. This list, and the figures for the excess preference dividends since the war, colour the charge that the ——— is an organ of 'capitalist propaganda'—that is, a paper which profits by and helps to preserve the *status quo*. (Vol. III, no. 4: p. 381-2.)

I hope I shall not be accused of suggesting that these passages were typical—still less of having dug them out, in a McCarthyist spirit, as exhibits for the prosecution. But such things, taken in conjunction with the climate of the 1930's, to me do appear to justify the expression 'a certain flirting': which phrase, I may say, was chosen with a modicum of care, to indicate something neither durable nor deep. Had I suggested that this was the *dominant* mood of *Scrutiny*, Dr. Leavis would have had good ground for complaint: but I did not say so. (I had thought, indeed, in my innocence, that I had said it was *not*.) Had I suggested that Dr. Leavis's own writings contained such elements, he would have had even better ground: but I did not say that either. I quite agree that he himself has never been 'engaged', in that sense, to anything, except to the pursuit of literary criticism and the cultivation of an extraordinary talent, exercised on many others before myself, for picking out of a context of thoroughgoing praise one small item to quarrel about.

PATRICK CRUTTWELL

Exeter, England

Dear Sirs,

I am at present engaged in preparing a study of the literary career of Ford Madox (Hueffer) Ford (1873-1939) and would appreciate it very much if anyone possessing letters or other material concerning his life and work would communicate with me.

Yours sincerely,

FRANK MACSHANE

60 Crofut Street
Pittsfield, Massachusetts

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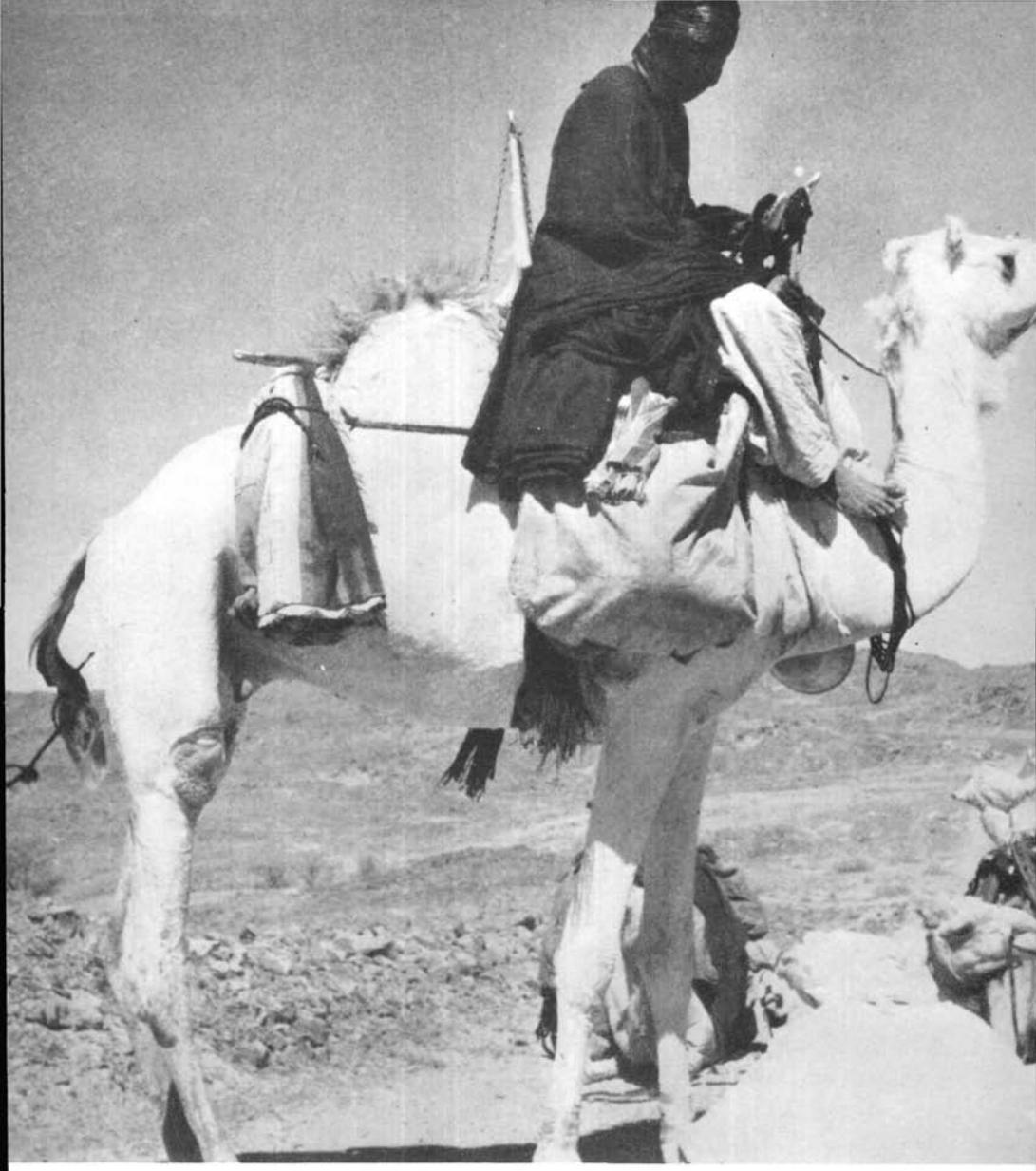

A Dagh Rahli Noble

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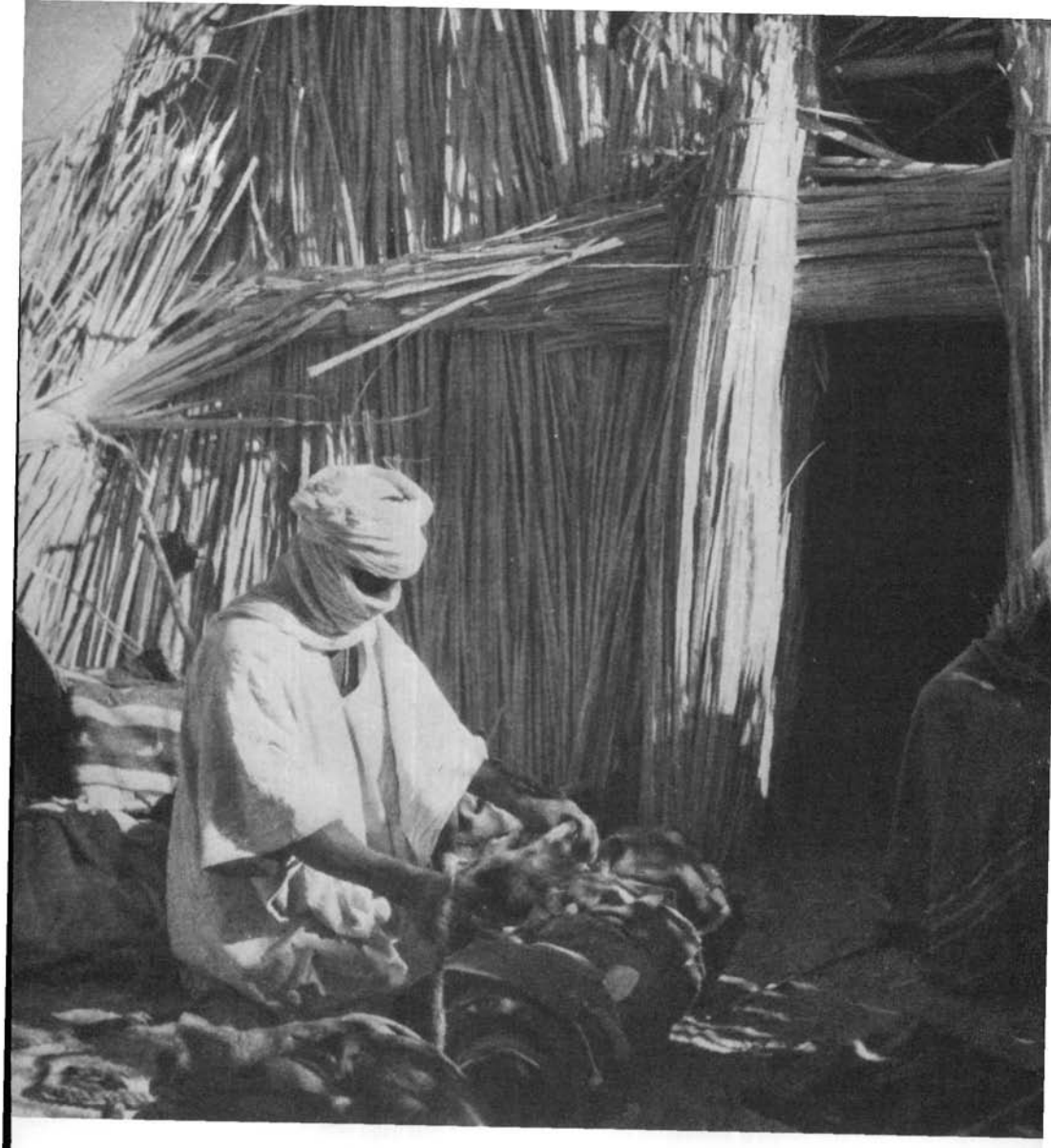

Grass Hut of the Harratin

Méharistes of the Hoggar [*opposite*]

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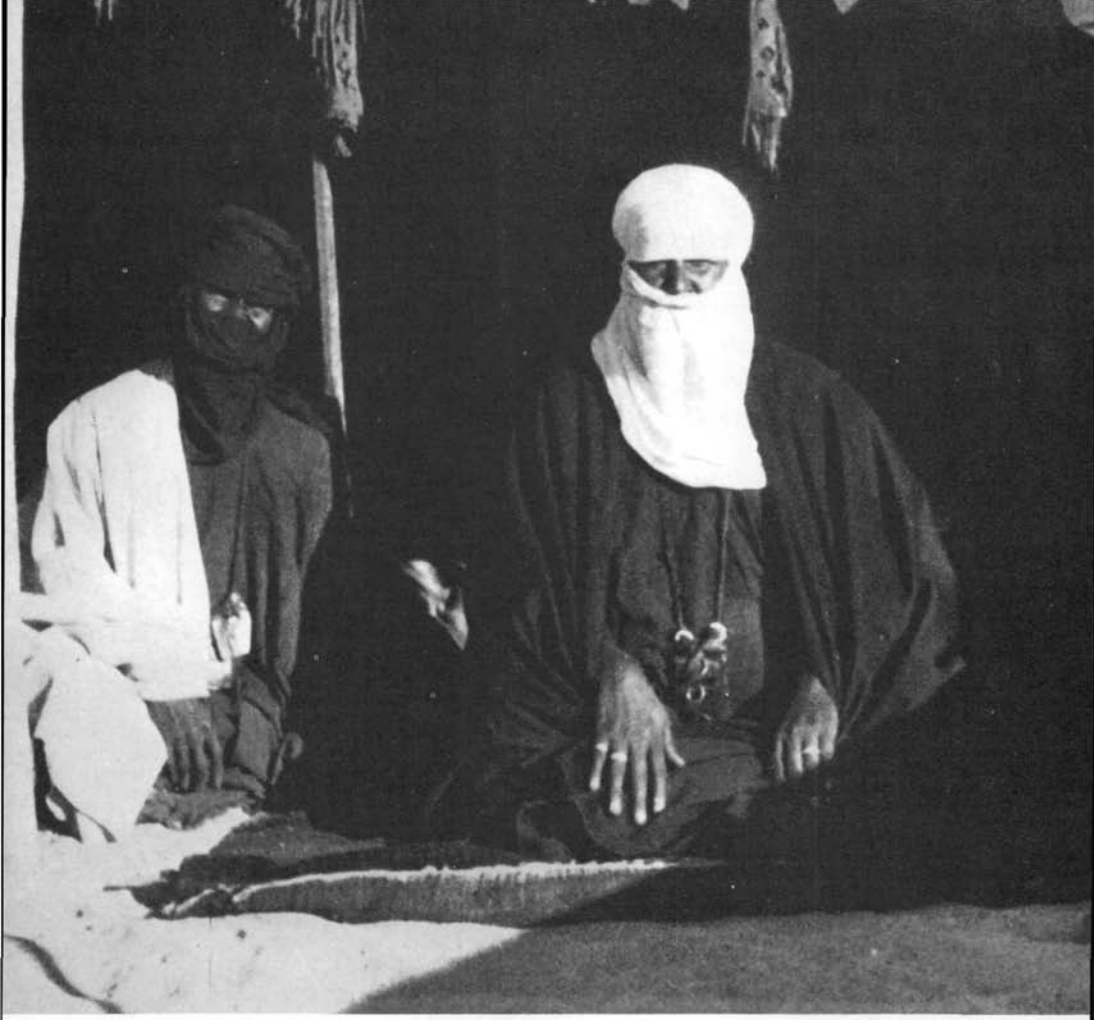

Aménokal Baï, Supreme Chief of the Tuareg

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GEA MATER by Sherri Martinelli

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